







Tracts

FOR MISSIONARY USE.

EDITED

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“LETTERS TO A MAN BEWILDERED AMONG
MANY COUNSELLORS.”

VOLUME I.

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P R E F A C E.

As the minister of the Church in these United States, and especially in a rural district, goes in and out among the people, he encounters many states of mind which are more or less modified by the age and country in which we live.

The writer of most of the pages which follow, has ventured to hope that a few familiar tracts upon the topics so often suggested by plain people, might be found useful. To this end he has stated difficulties in religion, and objections to the Church, as nearly as possible in the very terms which are used by those who allege them; and then he has attempted to clear the difficulty, and to answer the objection, not in the way of a complete exposition or refutation, but by such suggestions as may incline the reader to study more systematic books.

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Besides this, he has interwoven several stories of individual and personal experience, in the hope that some troubled soul may find that the path in which he seems to wander is not untravelled. While pastoral and friendly confidence has not been betrayed, these stories are in the main veritable histories. In reading such a narrative as "Childhood's Troubles," for instance, the parent is assured that it is a truthful account of the anguish and horror of mind endured by a child of the Church, baptized, but uninstructed in the benefits thereby conferred.

Whatever may be the defects of this volume, the editor points with much satisfaction to the articles contributed by kind friends, and which are duly credited in the Table of Contents.

In justice to the Rt. Rev. Fathers who have thus contributed, it must be observed, that the editor has not had it in his power to submit his work to their inspection; and that he alone is answerable for the articles whose authorship is not expressly indicated.

"The Doubting Christian" has been heretofore published; but, being out of print, permission was expressly asked to insert it in this volume. Two other

articles have been printed for private use, but are now published for the first time.

Should the present volumes find favor with the Church, the editor proposes to continue the series; but should success not be accorded, he will not regret having attempted, as best he could, to contribute something towards a popular Church literature.

HUNTSVILLE, ALA., *Lent*, 1859.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I. WHAT IS TRUTH? BY THE RT. REV. THOMAS ATKINSON, D.D.....	3
XII. THE DOUBTING CHRISTIAN ENCOURAGED. BY THE RT. REV. N. H. COBBS, D.D.....	35
III. WHY CAN'T OUR MINISTERS PREACH IN YOUR PULPITS?.....	59
IV. THE DOCTRINE OF THE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION A WHOLESOME DOCTRINE AND VERY FULL OF COMFORT.....	87
V. OUR LORD IN SIMON'S HOUSE; or, WHAT THE CHURCH DEMANDS FOR ADMISSION TO THE SACRAMENTS.....	117
VI. THE MESSAGE TO PETER. BY THE RT. REV. N. H. COBBS, D.D.....	155
VII. HOW THE CHURCH WAS BUILDED. BY A LADY.....	169
VIII. DEATH-BED REPENTANCE AND THE PARISH REGISTER. <i>Narrative</i>	187
XIX. THE PROCESS OF CONVERSION. <i>Narrative</i>	203
X. VISITATION OF PRISONERS. <i>Narrative</i>	225
XI. THE MEANING OF POMPS AND VANITIES. <i>A Story for Young People</i>	243



Tracts for Missionary Use.

No. 1.

W H A T I S T R U T H ?

BY

THE RT. REV. THOMAS ATKINSON, D.D.

BISHOP OF NORTH CAROLINA.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1859,
By DANIEL DANA, JR.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern
District of New York.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

This question was asked of Him, who came into the world specially to bear witness to the Truth, and who is Himself essentially the Truth ; its object, as well as its Revealer. He who propounded the question, was unhappy, impious Pilate.

The Saviour of mankind was then experiencing the fulfilment of those prophecies which announced His deepest humiliation and misery. Deserted and denied by His disciples, He had already been dragged before one and another unjust tribunal. At the bar of Caiaphas He had endured a mock trial, and been condemned without evidence. But the malice of His enemies had outstripped their power. Though they could condemn, they could not execute their sentence ; for “the Sceptre had now departed

from Judah, and the Lawgiver from between his feet."

In this dilemma, then, the infuriated Priests and Levites sacrifice the sentiments and instincts which heretofore had been the most cherished, and the most powerful in their bosoms; their jealousy of heathen interference in their national, and, especially, in their Ecclesiastical government; their abhorrence of that stern Roman domination which humiliated, even more than it oppressed them. They sacrifice even these powerful passions to that furious and almost diabolical hatred of the Holy Jesus which had become the master-principle; which had now, like Aaron's rod, swallowed up, as it were, the other serpents that infested their bosoms.

Urged on by this rage, they appeal, of their own accord, to that Jurisdiction, which, at other times, they were willing to shed their blood rather than acknowledge; they demand of the Roman Governor the death of their prisoner. Pontius Pilate thus appealed to, is greatly at a loss. He knew, none better, the wickedness of these men, and he, no doubt, scorned, like Gallio, all these questions concerning their Law; a Law which he never heard invoked except in the interests of spiritual pride, ambition, or malice. But he himself was far from being immaculate,

and he dreaded to provoke still further the hostility of men whom he had hitherto repeatedly outraged, and who were already demanding at the Imperial Court his recall and disgrace.

His feelings of justice and duty point one way ; his apparent interest another. What shall he do ?

He seeks, in the first instance, to extract from our Saviour's own lips a justification of the course which his interest prompts him to pursue. But our Lord, who thoroughly reads his heart, will not allow him thus to hide his baseness. Observe, in this point of view, the questions which Pilate asks, and the answers he receives. "Art thou," says he, "the king of the Jews?" If Jesus Christ now merely says, yes, as in effect He had often before done ; if now He says, simply and absolutely, yes ; then Pilate can at once condemn Him as guilty of high treason, as the rival of Cæsar. Our Saviour, with admirable wisdom, replies : "My kingdom is not of this world." His authority, then, is in no respect antagonistic to that of Cæsar, nor a just object of jealousy to the officers of Cæsar ; for Cæsar's authority is of this world. This world is the only world for which Cæsar cares ; the only world in which Cæsar believes. And our Lord goes on further to explain that His king-

dom is a moral and spiritual one; that He rules by the power of Truth, and that all who are of the Truth obey Him.

To this Pilate replies, "What is Truth?" What does the unhappy man mean by this question? Does he ask in good faith, in an humble and teachable spirit, that he may really learn the doctrines of the remarkable Person who then stood before him; and, if they commended themselves to his reason and conscience, embrace them? Alas! unhappily for him, this could not have been his meaning; for he does not even wait for an answer, but immediately goes out, this question unresolved.

I think it clear that he is speaking in the spirit of irony and derision, and his question is itself a sarcasm. It is as if he had said to his prisoner, Yours is indeed, by your own account of it, a notable mission! You poor man, whom the menials buffet, whom the very abjects trample on; you have come to bear witness to the Truth! What is this truth? Who knows it? When was it ascertained? There are opinions without number, one, perhaps, as good and as certain as another. But Truth, free, absolute Truth, who knows it? What is it?

This simple question reveals to us the man who asked it. As a flash of lightning in a dark

night gleams upon a man approaching us, and enables us in an instant to recognize his person and countenance; so these three words of Pontius Pilate disclose to us his state of mind, and character; for three words spoken in an earnest moment are worth three years of common-place talk, in enabling us to know a man. In these words we recognize the utterance of a troubled spirit, which doubts every thing; which sees no certainty but what the senses teach. Men of this sort may be found in all ages and states of society; but they are particularly abundant in an age, which is, on the one hand, sensual and luxurious, and on the other, inquisitive and enlightened. Such was the Augustan age in Rome; such was the 18th century in France; such, I cannot but believe, is the existing era in our own country.

The state of mind characteristic of these periods is not natural to man, but is a disease, the result of an artificial and corrupt condition of Society. Faith is natural to man; in saying which, however, I do not refer to Christian Faith, for that, we are expressly taught, is the gift of God in a special and supernatural sense (as indeed it must be supernatural, being the recipient and correlative of a supernatural Revelation). But I here speak of Faith, in its strictest

and most elementary sense, as the power of believing on testimony. This is an original faculty of our nature of the highest worth and most indispensable necessity, which may be affected and influenced by reason, by prejudice, and by passion, but has an origin independent of them all, and may work apart from other faculties, or concurrently with them. I call Faith a power. Many look on it as not much more than a weakness, confounding it with credulity. But it is in fact the power, by which a man is fitted for life, as well as for eternity. What can a man accomplish without Faith? Our daily life rests on Faith. We go forth to our work in Faith, *believing* that we shall be permitted to perform it; *believing* that, in some way, we shall be rewarded for it; *believing* that, after it, we shall be allowed rest and refreshment. We sleep in Faith, confiding in our safety; *believing* that no robber or assassin is at hand to destroy us. We eat in Faith, *believing* that our viands contain no deadly poison, no nauseous mixture. We learn by Faith. To what does History appeal but to Faith? To what Geography? To what Language? To what every thing, in short, save pure Science? Love rests on Faith. Without Faith, conjugal love curdles into jealousy, or blazes out into fiery wrath. Without Faith,

parental love withers and dies away. We live, even in this world, in an atmosphere of Faith, and as that becomes diluted, we faint; were it exhausted, we perish.

And while Faith is thus necessary for our temporal well-being, it is more especially the instrument of our spiritual life. God, Providence, Redemption, Eternity, Judgment, Heaven and Hell are perceived and realized only by the light of Faith. It is, to use the grand expression of an Apostle, “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

This faculty of Faith was, no doubt, like the other powers and excellencies of man, perfect in our state of primeval integrity and holiness, and has been weakened by the Fall. Even now we may observe, that it is vigorous and active in proportion to the purity and innocence of him who exercises it. Observe, for example, a young child, in whose bosom sin still lies dormant, and whose face is yet bright with the reflection of Heaven; observe him at his mother’s knee. With what unquestioning and absorbing Faith he listens to the tale she tells him, the counsels and instructions she imparts! How does he drink in nourishment from her soul, as when an infant he had imbibed it from her body; and how absolutely he yields himself to the impres-

sion which she desires to make! But alas! as he advances in life; as he finds himself in an untruthful and treacherous world; as he detects the falsehoods that are told him; and still more, as he himself becomes corrupt and capable of deceiving; he becomes likewise suspicious, sceptical, and incapable of believing. For falsehood in ourselves and Faith in others, are necessary and perpetual antagonists.

Society is made up of individuals. It follows then, as a necessary consequence, that when this individual deterioration becomes general, Society is corrupted, and Faith dissolves and dies out in its midst.

It was not by any arbitrary, or accidental connection, that the profligacy of French Society in the early and middle parts of the 18th century, was succeeded by the infidelity and Atheism, which so darkened and desolated that Society in the last few years of the same century. Kings, Priests, and Nobles had sowed the wind, and in due time, they reaped the whirlwind. The principles and practices of vice were with them the Dragon's teeth; Anarchy and Atheism were the armed men that sprang therefrom.

A tendency to disbelief is strengthened by other influences, with which we are experimentally very well acquainted.

When Truth is the subject of continued disputation and discussion ; when every article of a people's Creed is alternately attacked and defended ; when the tide of controversy ebbs at one point, only to swell at another ; then Faith wavers ; then, flitting over these angry waters, like the Dove in the Deluge, she finds no resting-place, and withdraws from the tumultuous scene.

It was at such a period that unhappy Pilate lived. His was a vicious age, and it was, moreover, a controversial age. The remains of Classical Antiquity which have come down to us from that period, admirable as they are for genius, and taste, and exquisite felicity of language, yet indicate a moral unsoundness scarcely to be conceived by those who live under Christian influences.

And as to Religious Truth, all was doubt and uncertainty. The speculations of some of the Philosophers, if not borrowed from Asia, and ultimately from Judea, were wonderful efforts of the human mind ; sometimes almost like anticipations and foreshadowings of the peculiar and mysterious disclosures of the Gospel. But, after all, they were only speculations. These philosophers had no standard of Truth ; no external testimony, no authenticated facts on which to base their reasonings. And the human mind

demands *facts, proofs, authority*. It cannot rest on speculations, however ingenious; it cannot feed on cobwebs spun out of its own substance.

A Truth which is not proved, is, as to its effect upon us, as a Truth which does not exist. And as to Moral and Theological Truth, nothing was proved in that old pagan world. What one Philosopher advanced, another denied. The disciple always felt himself wiser than his master; and when he in his turn set himself to be a teacher, his first task was to demolish the edifice his predecessor had reared, in order to clear the ground for his own structure.

In such a state of things, there could be no deep and earnest Faith. The most essential and sacred truths came, after a while, to be regarded as mere theories; ingenious perhaps, plausible, beautiful, but not certain; which their very advocates maintained with a peradventure.

It was under such influences, practical and speculative, that Pilate was reared; and as a Soldier and a Courtier, he probably partook of them to the full. When Jesus spoke of Truth; that is, of Religious Truth; He seemed to Pilate to babble. What cared Pilate for Truth? How did he know that there was any truth, except such as his bodily senses attested? He knew that Falernian wine had, in its way, a sort of

truth ; there was reality in it. And so with a well-filled purse ; and a retinue of slaves ; and a marble palace at Rome ; and a sea-side villa on the Campanian shore. And he knew very well that he had a master who was cruel and suspicious to the last degree ; who, for very slight cause, would consign him to the dungeon or the block.

He seems to have been heartily desirous, especially after his discourse with our Lord, to spare the blood of that Innocent One who stood before him. But, how can he safely do this ? The Prisoner indeed tells him that He is a witness for the Truth. But, what of that ? What will Truth avail him if he discharge the accused person ? Will Truth calm a violent and factious mob, urged on by crafty and unscrupulous hypocrites ? Will Truth satisfy a sanguinary Despot, who revels in human blood like a tiger ? In short, is Truth of any practical value ? is it worth any thing in the market ? Has it ever fed a man, or clothed him, or turned the edge of an executioner's axe ? In short, "What is Truth ?" impatiently and scornfully asks Pontius Pilate.

And are there none who speak the same language at the present day, at least in heart ? Depend upon it, there are many. Our age is a vicious age, if Murder, Adultery, Burglary, Rob-

bery, Peculation, Fraud, Theft, and Imposture constitute vice. Our age is controversial also. We generally call ourselves Christians, but we dispute about the very first principles of Christianity; and in all the little villages in our land, not large enough, frequently, for a single vigorous congregation, there are usually three, four, five, or six religious parties, watching each other, contending with each other, and, not unfrequently, reviling each other. What is the result? Charity is cold, and Faith weak; for how can Faith be strong in tenets that are merely the foot-balls of contending parties? When religious Truth is presented, not so much to be believed and acted on, as to be discussed and argued for; what result is possible except that there can be no deep Faith? Many persons seem to think, like Pilate, that there is no such thing as Truth; or what is equivalent, that there is no means of ascertaining it; for "a Truth not proved, is to us as a Truth which does not exist."

There are many persons, however, who, having no hope of ascertaining religious Truth, rest now in the opinion that, in inquiries concerning religion, Truth is not important, but only a sincere belief of what we profess to believe. It is thought neither reasonable nor charitable, to condemn a man for religious error, if he hold it

sincerely. Sincerity, in short, is made the same thing with Truth.

But, are they the same thing? Truth, without sincerity, will, of course, avail us nothing; but of what avail will sincerity be, without Truth? If that were sufficient, how unreasonable and unjust was it in St. Paul, to call himself the chief of sinners, because he persecuted the Church of God! for, at the time he did this, he sincerely believed he was thereby doing God service. If sincerity, without Truth, will suffice, what charge can be brought against Bonner, or Torquemada, or Julian the Apostate, or the very Scribes and Pharisees who imbrued their hands in the Saviour's blood, and reviled Him on the cross? Who can say that these men were insincere in their detestable principles of conduct? If sincerity without Truth will suffice, what evil is there in being a Turk, or a Heathen, if we only bring ourselves sincerely to embrace these foul superstitions? But the principle, if true, ought to be carried further. What harm is there in being a robber, or a murderer, if we can only sear the conscience, and blunt the moral sense enough to consider robbery and murder lawful? The French demagogue, Marat, compared with whom Robespierre was forgiving, and Danton merciful, expressed, during one of

the paroxysms of the Great Revolution, the conviction, that the only effectual remedy for the evils of the country was, to cut off the heads of two hundred and sixty thousand Aristocrats. He was denounced before the National Convention for thus instigating wholesale massacre. His reply was very short and plain. "*It is,*" said he, "*my opinion.*" No doubt it was. He had reached that point of wickedness, that, like a wolf, he loved blood for its own sake. But, what reply could be made to him, if sincerity be the same thing with Truth?

Such views, when pushed to their consequences, make the worst men the best; for it is the worst men who most sincerely believe their own conduct to be entirely right, because they know no difference between right and wrong, between good and evil.

Be assured, my friends, in order to be right—in order to be safe—it is not enough to be sincere; it is necessary to hold the Truth sincerely. There *is* such a thing as Truth, whatever sceptics, whatever sensualists may say to the contrary.

It has an existence independent of all that men think concerning it. If we shut our eyes to the sun, we do not extinguish it thereby, it still shines on; so, if we remain ignorant of the

Truth, or reject it, it still subsists. Nay, if the whole world agrees to deny it, it still subsists. It is indeed immortal. Religious Truth is the transcript of the Eternal Ideas in the mind of God. Error is of the earth, earthly. Error is perishable. Error is like the false lights of a morass, which dance about the traveller's path, only to lead him astray, and themselves speedily to disappear. Truth is like the light of the stars which shine on the mariner as they shone on his Tyrian predecessor thousands of years ago, to guide him on his course, and conduct him in safety to the haven where he would be.

Well, then, may the wise man say : "Buy the truth and sell it not." Buy it at any price ; sell it at no price. Buy it with toil, with obloquy, with suffering, with danger. Sell it not for money, nor fame, nor safety, nor popularity, nor life.

Truth is the proper, the appointed food and medicine for the soul. The soul of man was made to receive the Truth, as his bodily eye the light ; and as light is sweet to the eye, so is Truth delightful to the soul. The perception of a new Truth cheers, exalts, and invigorates the soul. And this is especially applicable to religious Truth. Religious Truth is that which per-

tains to God, to the spirit of man, to Eternity. Of all Truth, this is the grandest, the noblest, the most refreshing. It is this especially which strengthens the powers, and moulds the character, and purifies the nature. "Sanctify them through Thy Truth," says our Saviour. And religious error is, consequently, of all errors, the most dangerous, the most debasing, the most to be deplored. There is no question then so vital as, **HOW SHALL WE ASCERTAIN RELIGIOUS TRUTH?**

In pursuance of the subject, I propose, therefore, to consider the grounds and tests of religious Truth.

When we remember the infinite importance of the question : What is Truth? and how peculiarly He to whom it was addressed by Pontius Pilate was fitted to answer it, we cannot but lament that the proud and sensual Governor did not wait for a reply, but rose up and left his question unresolved ; thereby cutting himself off, and us likewise, from the benefits of that reply which Divine Wisdom might have vouchsafed. This is our first, spontaneous feeling. But when we consider our Lord's discourses, we find that He has not left us in entire ignorance, or even in any serious doubt on this vital subject. He, and His Apostles speaking by His Spirit, have, on a plain and fair interpretation of their lan-

guage, pointed out a method by which we may ascertain all religious Truth that it is indispensable, or even in a high degree important for us to know. He has told us, in the first place, what is the repository of Truth; the fountain from which its waters flow. He says to His Heavenly Father: "Sanctify them through Thy Truth. Thy Word is Truth." He recognizes here the function of Truth to sanctify, and He points out the very spring from which we are to draw the purifying stream. It is the Word of God. We may then be assured, that all Truth necessary for man's sanctification here, and for his salvation hereafter, is contained in God's Word.

And this would seem to result from the very idea of a Divine Revelation to mankind for their spiritual good. Such a Revelation must be effectual to its end, because it comes from God, and therefore it must contain all that is necessary to salvation. And to this agrees the saying of St. Paul: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

But, though Scripture certainly contains all essential religious Truth, is it certain that they who read the Scriptures draw therefrom this

saving Truth, pure and undefiled? What is the language of Scripture itself on this subject? While the Inspired Writers profess to teach Truth, nothing but Truth, and all necessary Truth; they yet warn us, that they may be so misinterpreted, that the water of life may be so tinctured by the vessel which receives it as to convey poison, rather than to heal the soul. "We are," say they, "a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one, we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other, the savor of life unto life." And so again, elsewhere it is said, that there are in Scripture "many things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable, wrest to their own destruction." This then is the testimony of Scripture as to its own effect: that, though true and divine, and, to him who rightly receives it, sanctifying and saving, it is not necessarily or universally so; but that, because of the ignorance or perversity of the hearer, it is sometimes a source of error, and even of fatal, ruinous error.

How do we find it in point of fact? Is this warning verified by experience? Incontestably it is.

Where there are opposite interpretations of Scripture, one, at least, must be wrong. Now,

consider the contrarieties of belief among persons who all suppose that they draw their Faith from Scripture.

There is a large body who understand the Scriptures as teaching Transubstantiation, Purgatory, Worship of the Saints and Adoration of the Virgin Mary. Another large class of persons, so far from seeing authority for these doctrines in Scripture, see there, as they believe, the plainest and strongest condemnation of them. There are those again, who infer from Scripture that Jesus was but a man, and that the Holy Ghost is but an influence. Others, on the contrary, are persuaded by the same Scriptures, that Jesus Christ is Very God, and that the Holy Ghost is Personally God.

Now, one party or the other in this latter controversy, for instance, does certainly mistake the whole sense of Scripture ; for every doctrine of Christ's religion depends upon what Christ Himself was. The entire meaning of the Gospel then, as we receive it, rests on what we think of Christ. But the sense of Revelation is the Revelation. The book is but paper, with characters inscribed on it. The words in themselves are but sounds or marks. The sense, the thing said, is that which is revealed. When, then, two men differ entirely about their religion, they

have two different religions. If, for example, Unitarians are right, Trinitarians are idolaters; if Trinitarians are right, Unitarians are unbelievers.

Here, then, and in many other instances, we have different classes of persons, drawing opposite conclusions from the same Scriptural teachings, and one side or the other necessarily falling into error, which must be frequently fatal error.

How, then, shall we know what is Truth in the interpretation of Scripture? The Scripture is, indeed, authenticated by miracles, prophecies, by its own tenor, and by its effects. Truth is there; but how shall we find it, and know that we have found it? The treasure is, beyond doubt, in the field, but how shall our feet be guided with certainty to the precious deposite? Yet, it is all-important to find it. We must draw from Scripture, Truth or Error; and what we want is Truth. Error does not feed the soul, it poisons it. Error does not sanctify, it pollutes, it corrupts. Error does not save, it destroys. What then is Truth? How shall we ascertain it?

There are two means which we may employ, and which ought to be combined, that, if faithfully used, will, as I am persuaded, and can

prove to you, lead us to all essential Truth, and I may, perhaps, safely say, to all important Christian truth.

First, then, *in the interpretation of Scripture, give great weight to that meaning which has been universally held in the Church of Christ; and, in matters essential to salvation, in the groundwork of the Faith, acknowledge and bow to its conclusive Authority.*

For, consider how we stand in regard to it. Our Saviour has promised the aids of His Spirit to all who sincerely seek to know the Truth. "Ask," says He, "and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find." And so says the Apostle: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." If, then, any man were purely candid, thoroughly earnest, perfectly unbiased in seeking Divine light and wisdom, it would be communicated to him without any taint of error. But no man is thus perfect in the spirit in which he seeks wisdom. We live in an atmosphere of opinion, prejudice, passion and interest, which refracts and distorts, to a greater or less extent, the rays of Divine Truth shining in upon the mind. No man, therefore, is right in all his opinions, that is, no man is infallible.

But yet, he who sincerely seeks to know the Truth, and prays to be led to it, has, by the promise of Christ, some ground to hope when he has arrived at a conclusion, that it is a true one. A certain measure of probability attaches to his judgment, because it is his judgment. But, as the promise is made to no one in particular, but to every one who uses the appointed means, if the result which one comes to in the use of these means is *probably* the truth, there is, at least, *a double probability* of the truth of that result at which two arrive: perhaps more than a double probability, because Truth is but one, and error manifold. When, then, twenty independent inquirers, all using faithfully the means which Christ has promised to bless, come to one conclusion, the probability that this is the right conclusion is immensely enhanced.

How is it, then, when many millions believe the same thing? How is it, when the great body of Christians are led to believe in one interpretation of Scripture as its true meaning? How is it, when they come to this conclusion in different countries, states of society, degrees of civilization, while holding adverse opinions on other subjects? How is it, when the dead are united with the living in bearing testimony to a certain interpretation of Scripture, as that to

which Christ by His Spirit has guided them? When to the present generation, we add the sixty generations of the past, the thousands of thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand from the Apostolic age to our own day, who, having labored in faith and hope, have now gone to their rest in peace and joy, and who, with considerable diversities of opinion as to many doctrines and usages, have yet agreed in *the Faith*, in the principles, the foundation of Divine Truth; what can we say, but that these have obtained what they sought, and that we are safe in following them?

And this, too, for another reason. This great "cloud of witnesses," who all attest the same essential Gospel, comprehend among them the purest and holiest representatives of Christianity; the Martyrs, the great Saints, the men of whom the world was not worthy. This is indisputable, and indeed, is undenied, that the men whom all Christians delight to honor, were men who believed in the ancient, generally received creed of Christendom; that they were not eccentric in their religion; that they were not innovators on the Faith.

What, then, is the spectacle we witness? That men believing a certain form of sound words, holding a distinct, definite, and historical

Faith, the Faith of all Christian ages and all Christian countries ; that these men have been the champions of the Cross, most holy in their tempers, and most heavenly in their lives. But Jesus Christ said it was the nature of His Truth to sanctify. These men were sanctified. What inference then is left, but that what they believed is the Truth ?

The great Physician tells us that His medicine is to produce a certain extraordinary result. The result is produced. What can we, if we revere Him, what can we believe, but that the medicine employed was that which He provided ; that the doctrine which purified, was the doctrine He taught ?

Surely it is incredible, it is impossible, that the Saints, Confessors, and Martyrs of Christianity were all mistaken in the very groundwork of that Faith, in the strength of which they lived, and in honor of which they died.

Now, this united testimony to the Truth, is what we mean by the voice of the Church. And, that we may see that its authority does not rest merely on the principles of reason, let us remember the declaration of St. Paul : that “the Church of the Living God is the pillar and ground of the Truth ;” sustains it, upholds it, proclaims it.

What then shall be thought of the humility and reasonableness of that man, who, on some cardinal doctrine of the Gospel, opposes his individual opinion, or that of some little ephemeral sect to which he belongs, to the testimony of the general Church of God? Why, the very act is his own sentence of condemnation. It proves nothing about the doctrine, but it proves much as to him; that he is that proud and haughty scorner, who is self-disqualified from understanding the Word and the ways of Christ. For it is “the meek He will guide in judgment, and the meek He will teach His way;” and except we become “as little children,” we cannot enter His kingdom. This single consideration is enough to satisfy us of the utter fallacy of all new-fangled opinions in religion; whether we call them developments, as the Romanists do; or discoveries, as the founders of new sects proclaim their notions to be.

This line of thought applies mainly to *the Faith*; that is, to the elementary and essential principles of the Gospel. Concerning these we may say, they are settled by manifold testimonies of Scripture, understood in the same sense by the great body of the faithful of all times and countries; and he who endeavors to unsettle them, is an adversary to the

Truth as it is in Jesus, and an enemy of our souls.

But, besides these great and indispensable truths, there are very important doctrines of the Gospel, not, perhaps, essential to our salvation, but yet comforting and strengthening and purifying when made known to us. How shall we, as to these, ascertain what is Truth ?

Undoubtedly, our first duty is to use diligently all the means of ascertaining the true sense of Scripture, which Providence has placed in our power. The God of Scripture, is the God of Providence. If, then, He gives us a book, which it is oftentimes hard to understand, and at the same time, provides us with means to understand it, He surely thereby intimates to us that we must use these means. A man who meets with some difficulty in Scripture, but yet makes no careful inquiry, searches for no collateral source of light, but leaps to some explanation which he is then prepared to maintain to be the true one ; this man, in effect, has rejected the help which God offers him, and has no right to believe that God has guided him to his conclusion.

God guides those only who observe the way-marks He has set up : and if the careless inquirer even pray for wisdom to understand the Scrip-

tures, he has no right to expect a favorable answer to his prayers. Prayer unaccompanied by the use of means is a mockery of God, not a reverent worship offered Him. The husbandman who prays for a harvest, while he does not cultivate his fields, exhibits, not piety, but presumption. And he who seeks to know the meaning of Scripture, and neglects to use all available means which may assist him to understand it, is likely to wander on in darkness: nay, his darkness will be the more profound because he supposes he has found the light.

So, then, when at a loss as to the meaning of God's Word, it is our plain duty to compare Scripture with Scripture, to use, as far as we can, the labors of the wise, and the learned, and the pious, who have investigated the same subject. We must inquire whether there has been in the Church a settled interpretation of a doubtful passage, or a clear definition of one that is obscure; and if we find such, although not absolutely bound by it, in matters not "*de fide*," not fundamental truths; yet we must always respect it and allow it great weight.

Having thus informed ourselves; having thus prepared the materials for judgment; we must humbly and earnestly cast ourselves upon God to help us, and pray Him to enlighten our judg-

ment and guide us to the Truth. Then may we well hope that prayers offered up in the spirit of docility will be graciously heard ; and that to us will be fulfilled those words of encouragement : “ If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not ; and it shall be given him.”

Now, let me briefly sum up what I have been teaching.

1st. That all moral and religious truth important to mankind and essential to our welfare, is contained in Holy Scripture ; so that, in the language of our Article, “ Whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the Faith ; or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.” Tradition then, the writings of the Fathers, the decrees of councils and the like, however valuable for other purposes (and for some important purposes they are very valuable), are yet, not a part of Revelation, nor a source of Divine Truth.

2dly. In the interpretation of Holy Scripture, the voice of the Church, in all ages, is always authoritative and sometimes conclusive. It is conclusive in doctrines essential to salvation. The Church of Christ as a whole cannot have erred in the essentials of salvation, otherwise,

the great body of believers have perished because of their Faith ; which is plainly inconsistent with the very purposes for which the Church was given, and with Christ's promise to be with it to the end of the world, and that the gates of Hell should not prevail against it. This principle is fatal to all new lights in religion, especially to such as bear on essential doctrines.

3dly. In understanding doctrines not essential to salvation, and yet important, it is necessary to use human means, together with earnest, hearty prayer for Divine guidance. And yet even here, a large measure of respect and deference is due to the uniform and distinct teachings of the Church. Now, the Church of Christ has summed up those doctrines which she judges essential to salvation in her Creeds. These we must receive at our soul's peril. There are others as to which her testimony throughout the ages and throughout the world is also distinct and plain, although they are not placed by her on the same ground of necessity with the truths of the Creed. These are the lawfulness and usefulness of Infant Baptism, and of Confirmation ; the Apostolic Succession in the Ministry ; the divine origin and obligation of the Eucharist and the like.



Tracts for Missionary Use.

No. 2.

THE

DOUBTING CHRISTIAN ENCOURAGED.

BY

THE RT. REV. N. H. COBBS, D.D.

BISHOP OF ALABAMA.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1859,

BY DANIEL DANA, JR.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern
District of New York.

THE DOUBTING CHRISTIAN ENCOURAGED.

“And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”—ST. MARK, ix. 24.

THESE words of the text are a part of a very interesting portion of the New Testament, and are well calculated to affect us with the liveliest sensibility. “And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth and gnasheth with his teeth and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out, and they could not. He answereth and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto me. And they brought him unto Him; and when He saw him, straightway the spirit tare him, and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And He asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him?

And he said, Of a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if Thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. And Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, *Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.*"

There is something very affecting in the words of the father of the afflicted child. He was in a most painful struggle between hope and fear:—anxiously solicitous for relief of his poor unfortunate child, he felt his fearful responsibility when told that the recovery of the child depended upon the strength of his own faith. Although he was conscious of having faith in the power of the Saviour to heal diseases in general, yet there were circumstances in the case of his own child which excited his fears. The disciples had tried to heal his child, and had failed—and it might be that the efforts of the Saviour himself would prove equally unavailing. No wonder, then, that the tender heart of the father sought relief in tears, and that he should utter the pathetic exclamation of the text, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." As much as to say, "Lord, I do wish to believe—I do try to

believe—I think, indeed, that I do believe: yet I must confess that I have many doubts and fears; I am not certain that my faith is sincere; I may, after all, be deceived;—Lord, wilt Thou be pleased to have mercy on my weakness, and help me to believe, and heal my poor child, notwithstanding all the defects of my faith.”

In these words of the father of the child we see the exercise of weak and doubting believers in the present day. There are multitudes ready to exclaim, and even sometimes with tears, “Lord, we believe; help Thou our unbelief.”

In speaking from these words of the text, we will inquire into some of the causes of a weak and a doubting faith among believers. For it is obvious that a large number of them are laboring under a heavy burden of doubts and fears; that their spiritual prospects are often confused and overclouded, and that the calmness of a settled and prevailing peace is a stranger to their bosoms.

It is true, that in many cases these doubts and fears proceed from neglect of duty, from the consciousness of transgressions, from worldly-mindedness, and from not attending upon the ordinances of the Gospel. In all such cases it is right and proper that Christians should be distressed with doubts and fears; it is a merey that

they are so: these doubts and fears may be the means of their safety, the way by which they are to be brought to self-examination, to repentance and reformation. Sad, indeed, would it be for such persons to be crying peace, peace, when the Scriptures and their own consciences tell them "there is no peace." But yet there are numbers of humble, sincere, conscientious, and tender-hearted people, who are often distressed with doubts and fears, and all proceeding from the want of a clear view of the doctrines of the Gospel. It will, therefore, be the object of the present remarks, to inquire why such persons are laboring under a weak and doubting faith.

1. *Some persons confound faith with assurance, and think they cannot have a saving faith unless they are certain of being converted and accepted.*

Some persons there are, who tell you that they do wish to believe, that they do try to believe, that they are willing to go to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to put all their trust and confidence in His merits and mercy. But they are afraid that Christ will not receive them; they feel as though it would be presumption in them to claim an interest in His salvation; that, although they do sometimes cherish a hope in the Saviour, yet they neither know the time nor the

place of their conversion; that they are not certain they have the witness of the Holy Spirit, nor that God has pardoned their sins. Now, to these very common difficulties, experienced by humble and serious inquirers, we would say that faith is a different thing from *assurance*; from a *certain confidence* of being converted. Persons may be very confident of being converted; may think to have an assurance of the pardon of their sins, and yet have no true saving faith, no vital religion. Indeed, it sometimes happens that those who have the most confidence and assurance, have the least claims to true evangelical faith.

Faith is a looking to Christ, is an humble trusting in Christ, an acceptance of Christ; it is a belief in the word, and promise, and power of Christ; it is submission to His laws; it is the resting upon Christ of one's whole hope of mercy and salvation; it is the embracing of Christ, as He is set forth in the Gospel, as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. But all this has nothing to do with a confidence that we are converted, with an assurance that we are accepted. For example, when the eunuch, after listening to the preaching of Philip, inquired "if he might not be baptized," or, in other words, make a profession of religion, Philip answered, "If thou believest

with all thine heart, thou mayest ;” to which the eunuch replied, “ I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God ;” or, in other words, “ I accept the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour of sinners. I accede to the terms of salvation, as laid down in the Gospel ; and put my whole trust and confidence in God’s mercy, through Christ Jesus.” Whereupon Philip immediately baptized him, and received him into the Church of Christ. Again, when the frightened jailor asked the apostles Paul and Silas, “ what he must do to be saved,” they did not tell him he could not be saved unless he was confident of being pardoned and converted, that he must be certain that his sins were forgiven him ; but they told him, “ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” They taught him to look to Jesus, to accept Him as a Saviour, to put his whole trust and confidence in His merits and mercy. If the jailor would do this in sincerity, the apostles knew that he would be saved : not because of any confidence or assurance derived from his feelings, or notions, or impressions ; but because of *the promise of God’s mercy contained in the Gospel*. As to the doctrine sometimes taught, that we cannot be Christians unless we know the time and place of our conversion, we would remark, that according to this standard of

judging, we cannot know that we are alive, unless we can remember the time and place of our natural birth; that where this evidence is wanting, we are dead, and have never been born, though we can eat, and drink, and move, and work, and perform all the other functions and offices of life. And as regards the witness of the Holy Spirit, we must determine that important fact, not from any glow, or excitement, or transport of feeling, not from any notion, or fancy, or impression fastening itself upon the mind, but by calmly comparing our exercises, views, feelings, hopes, desires, and conduct, with the word of God, as revealed in the Gospel. The written word of the Gospel is the formal, official testimony of the Holy Spirit spread upon record; and in order that we may know that we are under the guidance and teaching of that same Spirit, we must compare ourselves, our exercises and conduct with the written Word. In this way we may ascertain, not from whim, or fancy, or transports, but from Scripture, experience, and plain common sense, whether we have the Holy Spirit bearing witness with our spirits that we are the children of God.

2. *Some persons labor under doubts and fears from misapprehending the whole plan of Gospel salvation.* Being awakened to the knowledge

of the truth, seeing and feeling themselves to be poor, miserable, guilty sinners, these persons are afraid to go to Christ, and to trust in Him for mercy. Most gladly, indeed, would they go to Christ, and embrace Him as their own friend and Saviour; but they dare not, *they feel too unworthy, they are not good enough.* The piteous cry of each one of them is, “Lord, I believe that Thou art merciful, and willing to save others, but I am afraid I am so wicked and vile, that there is no mercy for me. My sins press heavily upon me; and peace and comfort are strangers to my bosom. Others may have hope, and peace, and joy, but with me all is darkness, and doubt, and fear. In the words of the hymn,

‘I hear, but seem to hear in vain,
Insensible as steel;
If aught is felt, ‘tis only pain
To find I cannot feel.’”

Now, with these persons, the great difficulty is, that they endeavor to justify themselves, and to become righteous before they go to Christ. They forget the great doctrine of the Gospel, that “*Christ came to save sinners*,” “*to seek and to save that which is lost*,” “*to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance*,” “*to invite not the self-righteous, but the poor in spirit, the weary and heavy laden to come unto Him*.” Christ has

the robes of salvation ; and instead of sewing up fig-leaves to make to themselves garments, they must go NAKED to Christ, and be clothed of Him in the robes of righteousness. They must not wait to be filled, but must go *hungry*, yea, *starving*, and be fed from the bountiful stores of *Christ's table*. They must not wait to become clean, but as *leprous, polluted, and unclean*, they must go to Christ, and be washed in the *purifying blood of the Lamb*. They must not hope to justify themselves by any efforts or services, but they must go as *guilty sinners*, and be forgiven all their sins ; *freely*, because of the *atonement and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ*. These persons will never go to Christ, if they wait till they become *fit, worthy, good enough* ; if they delay till they have *repented* enough, and *believed* enough, and been *humbled* enough to recommend them to the favor of Christ, and to justify them in the sight of God ; if they hope to find in themselves any reasons by which they may think themselves entitled to claim the mercy of God. We repeat it, therefore, these persons must go to Christ as *sinners, poor, lost, ruined sinners*. They must give themselves up unconditionally to God in Jesus Christ, with a full consciousness of being altogether unworthy ; they must place their whole trust and confidence

in the righteousness, and merits, and mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this way, the painful conflict in their breasts will be terminated, the burden of guilt will be removed ; and as they humbly repose upon the simple but sure promise of God's mercy in Christ Jesus, the dark clouds will be dispersed from their spiritual horizon, and hope, and peace, and comfort, will be felt in their souls.

3. Another reason why persons labor under doubts and fears is, *because they overlook one of the great objects of Gospel revelation, which was to certify us of God's good-will to men.* These persons think they are to determine whether God is willing to have mercy upon them by some strange unnatural feeling, by some peculiar manifestation, by some extraordinary impression upon their minds, by some special inward revelation of God's grace and pardon. They say they do believe, at least they do try to believe, they are willing to go to Christ as poor lost sinners, they do give up and put their whole dependence in the merits of the Saviour; but yet with them all is darkness, and doubt, and fear. No light of hope cheers their dreary prospects, no voice of mercy greets their anxious ears, no evidence from on high has been received that their sins have been forgiven, that they have been accept-

ed of God, and that Jesus Christ is their individual friend, their present Saviour. The mournful cry of each one of them is this,—“Oh, that I could *know*, could be *certain* that God was willing to have mercy upon *me*, that Jesus Christ died for *me*, that my sins were *now* pardoned, and that I might call Jesus Christ ‘*my Lord and my God.*’” Now the difficulty with these persons is this, they disregard the settled testimony of God’s word and institutions, the plain simple purpose of the Gospel revelation, and look for an extraneous evidence which is vague and indefinite,—an evidence which can be subjected to no fixed rules of examination, but which depends on frames and feelings, upon impulses and fancies; in a word, they overlook the evidence which God has established, and seek after that which man imagines or invents. Now, if it is by our frames and feelings alone that we are to determine God’s purposes towards us, if this is the only ~~sure~~ evidence by which we are to determine whether or not God pardons our sins, of what use, of what benefit is the Gospel? If it is yet to be left to our frames and feelings, to individual illumination, to determine the momentous question of God’s willingness to save sinners, then, indeed, the Gospel was given in vain, and the angels of heaven were mistaken, when, re-

garding the birth of the Saviour as the great, conclusive, and standing evidence of God's merciful purposes towards men, they exclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men." If it is to be left to our feelings and impulses alone to ascertain our adoption and acceptance, how are we to ascertain these feelings, how to distinguish the true from the false, the workings of the Spirit from the conceits of imagination? Or are we, without consulting the written word of the Gospel, to take it for granted that these impulses and feelings are the direct witness of the Holy Spirit? If so, if there is no definite standard by which these feelings are to be tried, then all this boasted assurance, derived alone from this source, is but a blind leap in the dark, and is no assurance at all. Brethren, the great question whether God is willing to have mercy upon a sinner, is too important, too momentous, to be left to any frames or feelings of mortals. It was the express object of the Gospel revelation to certify us of God's willingness to save sinners; it was in order to place that blessed truth beyond all doubt and controversy, that the Lord Jesus Christ lived, and taught, and suffered, and died, and rose again. It was for this purpose that a Church, with its sacraments, was established, and

that a living ministry was instituted to go abroad and proclaim the glad tidings of salvation, to stand before men face to face, and as they rise up in successive generations, to tell them the good news that God is willing to save sinners. Wherefore, since God has given us the inspired word of His Gospel, and therein made known to us the revelation of His will, it is now our duty and privilege to be guided by the Gospel as a sure and infallible standard. By the Gospel we are to determine whether we repent of sin, whether we are willing to accept the pardoning mercy of God, whether we are ready to accede to the terms of salvation, and whether we have "the Holy Spirit bearing witness with our spirits that we are the children of God." In the Gospel, God makes known His will unto men; in the Gospel the terms of salvation are plainly laid down; therein the marks and evidences of conversion and adoption are clearly specified, and all the fruits of the Holy Spirit distinctly enumerated. It is, therefore, by the Gospel that we are to test the exercises of our hearts, our frames and feelings, and thus ascertain, in a clear and satisfactory manner, "whether we are born of the Spirit," and "are become new creatures in Christ Jesus."

4. *Some persons are filled with doubts and fears*

because of an injudicious comparison of their own religious exercises with the exercises of others. They see others strong in the faith, cheerful and happy in the enjoyment of religious comforts, apparently growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ ; while they themselves are weak and feeble, full of doubts and fears, and groaning under a burden of sin and corruption. They therefore become discouraged, they sink down in despondency, and oftentimes conclude that they know nothing of religion, and “are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, having no hope and without God in the world.” Now these persons do not consider that though “there is the same Spirit, there is a diversity of operations;” that some have one gift of the Spirit, and some another, and that always each one has something peculiar to himself. They should remember that all have their trials and difficulties, their doubts and fears, their temptations and besetting sins, their days of darkness and desertion ; and that those who now seem so much to abound in faith and hope and comfort, may ere long be weeping over the desolation of their spiritual prospects, and in the bitterness of their hearts may be asking “if the Lord has forgotten to be gracious, and if His mercy is clean gone forever ?” These persons should remember,

that though they find in their hearts so much sin and corruption, and think that surely none can be so unworthy as they; yet that all have to complain of the plague of their hearts, and to confess and bewail their infirmities and sinfulness in the sight of heaven. It was the complaint even of an apostle, that when “he would do good, he found evil was present;” “that though he delighted in the law of God after the inward man,” yet he saw “another law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin in his members.” But in this state of mind what was the resource of the apostle? to whom did he look for deliverance “from this body of death?” Hear him in his own words—“I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The apostle’s hope was in Christ Jesus, and *in Him alone*; he rested *simply upon the cross*. And here too must be placed the hopes of all believers; the strong as well as the weak. They must look to Jesus Christ; from first to last they must go as sinners to the cross of Christ, and all their hopes of acceptance with God, and of happiness in heaven, must rest upon no merits nor works of their own, but altogether upon God’s mercy, vouchsafed to sinners through the Lord Jesus Christ. The great anchor-hope of the Christian

is this—" *That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*" To this he clings through all the doubts, and fears, and trials of his toilsome pilgrimage; and in his fearful struggle with his last enemy, it is this that sustains his soul, and giving him the victory, enables him to depart with the song of triumph on his lips.

5. *The great importance of the interest at stake has a natural tendency to produce, in some persons, agitation, fearfulness, and alarm.* Some persons, from constitutional temperament, are prone to look on the dark and unfavorable side of objects; they are predisposed to melancholy forebodings, and seek morbid gratification in creating and cherishing a crowd of imaginary fears and evils. Now when persons of this constitutional tendency become interested in the momentous truths of religion, and when they find in themselves, after all their efforts, so much sin and corruption, they very naturally give way to sadness and melancholy, and ask if it is possible that such as they can be Christians; they think that they must be strangers to the converting and sanctifying power of grace, and that it is but the mockery, the profanation of holy things, for them to claim to be the followers of the Saviour. And even where there is no peculiar constitutional tendency to melancholy, the very magni-

tude of the interests involved will cause, in many persons, apprehension, anxiety, and agitation. The startling question will sometimes press itself into notice, "What if they should be deceived?" What if, after all their profession of religion before men, they should at last become castaways from the presence of God, and instead of gaining the joys of heaven, should be sentenced to endure the torments of hell? Being sincerely honest in their religious purposes, and utterly abhorring all manner of hypocrisy, such persons often become greatly distressed and alarmed, when they find in themselves so many repeated and melancholy proofs "that the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked." The sad complaint of each one is this: "Lord, I sometimes believe, or, rather, hope that I am a sincere Christian, that I am converted and become a new man in Christ Jesus. I do know it is my wish, my earnest prayer and effort, to be a sincere Christian; and that I would not willingly appear before men to be what I am not in the sight of God; but, alas! I have a heart so wicked, and I so often fall into sin and grieve the Holy Spirit, that I am awfully afraid I am yet a stranger to the sanctifying power of grace." "Search me, O God! and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way

everlasting." "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

Now to such persons we would say, that those who have the deepest religious feelings, are sometimes most doubtful of their religious attainments; that where there is most grace, there is commonly the most humility; that a weak faith may be as sincere and saving as a strong one; that these doubts and fears are incentives to duty and watchfulness, and barriers against sins and temptations; that those who have the least confidence and make the least pretensions, are often-times the most faithful in duty and the most persevering in well-doing; and that thus it is with believers in general, sometimes in hope, and sometimes in fear; yet, by the grace of God, constantly pressing onward, through manifold trials, temptations, and difficulties, and notwithstanding all their discouragements, defeats, and falls, successfully reaching the kingdom of heaven, and ultimately gaining a crown of life. It should be remembered, too, that the Christian's life here below is a state of warfare, and that no soldier can reasonably expect always to enjoy ease and comfort. Trials and hardships must be encountered; wearisome journeys, cold

and hunger, must be his portion ; and sometimes he must mingle in the fierce and deadly strife and danger of battle. Let then these weak and desponding believers go onward, notwithstanding all their doubts and fears, " looking only" to Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith. Though the way may be rough, and the difficulties may be great, and the prospects may be dark, and their spirits may be sad, yet let them *hold on to the promise*; yes, *let them hold on to the promise*, and all will come right at last; the hills will recede, and the way will become more smooth; the fury of the storm will be hushed, the clouds will disperse, the birds will resume their songs, the fields will look green and gay, and the sun, which had been so long concealed, or faintly seen at intervals, will shine forth in full-orbed glory, and sink to rest without a cloud or speck to dim his disk. God is faithful to His promise; like Himself, His promise is the same, "yesterday, to-day, and forever." Hear the exhortation of the pious Prophet of Israel: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light; *let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.*" And hear from the same Prophet, the promise of God: "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed,

for I am thy God ; I will strengthen thee ; yea, I will help thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

And here, in conclusion, we would remark, that the best remedy for all these doubts and fears, is *humble prayer* to God. This was the resort of the father of the afflicted child : "Help, Lord ; help *Thou* mine unbelief ;" and prayer must be our main resource under all the imperfections of our faith. We should recollect that faith is the gift of God, and we should, therefore, pray to Him to bestow upon us that most precious gift. We must ask for the Holy Spirit, "to work in us to will and to do," to enable us to believe, and to take hold of the sweet promises of mercy. And we have every encouragement to pray ; for God has promised to hear when we call, and to give when we ask ; and especially to "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." Let us, then, day by day, lift up our hearts to God ; let us pour out to Him the wants and sorrows of our souls ; let it be our earnest cry, that the Lord would help us to believe, that He would give us grace and strength to rise above all our fears, and to claim the Saviour as our personal Friend and Redeemer. Let us "go forward in the strength of the Lord, making mention of His righteousness and of His only,"

and we shall find, to our comfort, that our hearts, so long contracted by doubts and fears, will be relaxed and softened ; the affections of our souls will flow out and fasten themselves upon the Saviour ; the painful conflict in our bosoms will be terminated ; and the blessed "peace of God which passeth all understanding," will take the place of guilty and accusing fears. "We shall thus be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man ; Christ will dwell in our hearts by faith ; being rooted and grounded in love, we shall be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and to be filled with all the fulness of God."

Now unto Him which is able to do exceedingly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.—*Amen.*



Tracts for Missionary Use.

No. 3.

WHY CAN'T OUR MINISTERS PREACH
IN YOUR PULPITS?

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1859,

By DANIEL DANA, Jr.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern
District of New York.

WHY CAN'T OUR MINISTERS PREACH IN YOUR PULPITS ?

"I AM very willing to confess that I like many things I have observed in your Church exceedingly. I like your orderly ways: it pleases me to see what pains you take with the little children: your people are generally very quiet and well-behaved: and I always learn something when I hear you preach. But there is one thing I can't get over: it seems so uncharitable and unreasonable"—and here Squire Candid turned in his saddle towards his fellow-traveller, and with a tone half querulous and half sorrowful, added: "*Why can't our ministers preach in your pulpits?*"

Now, this inquiry is by no means a new one: it is very natural that many should propose it, and very necessary that it should be plainly answered.

The writer trusts, that in reporting the conversation with which this tract commences, he

may find readers as honest and well disposed as Squire Candid.

We are going a little too fast, however. Who was the fellow-traveller, and how did this talk come about?

The Rev. Mr. Worthy had lately taken up his residence in the beautiful village of Hamner as a Missionary of the Protestant Episcopal Church. He found there a few persons who, in their youth, had been brought up in her faith, and who were now very glad to produce certain old-fashioned Prayer-books, and to join in fitting up a cheap frame-building to serve as a church.

The villagers were quite divided in their religious sentiments, for there were Congregationalists, and Methodists, and Baptists, besides individual members of several other denominations. Yet their services were not very regular, and many a Sunday passed without public religious exercises. The religious people made it a point to go to hear the preacher, whatever his persuasion might be.

Mr. Worthy, on entering the community, had showed an evident desire to do the people good. He visited them familiarly at their homes, was careful to hurt nobody's feelings, and frequently left behind him a book or a tract to which no manner of exception could be taken. The towns-

folk thought him a very sensible, earnest preacher, and although “reading prayers” seemed very queer to them at first, when they saw how the children took to it, and how pleased they were when the Episcopal chapel was open, they were much disposed to think that there was good in it.

Things did not always go on as smoothly as they commenced. First, the Sons of Temperance asked for permission to have an address delivered in the chapel, as the warmest room to be found in the winter-time; and they thought it very narrow-minded in Mr. Worthy to refuse: and then there was a camp-meeting in the neighbourhood, which Mr. Worthy did not attend or assist in; and some said he was not as zealous as he might be: and last of all, somebody wanted to have a “funeral preached” in the chapel by a Presbyterian minister, after Mr. Worthy’s reading the Burial Service out of the Prayer-book. To this arrangement, also, the minister objected. As a consequence a good deal began to be said about his bigotry; many said they would never attend the ministry of one who would not let ministers of other denominations preach in his pulpit. Even Squire Candid, a good and religious old gentleman, who had at first been right well pleased, had given the missionary some

cold looks, and for some months past had abstained from going to his church.

Just now, however, accident had thrown the two together; they had met at a sick man's house in the country, and were riding home together. The Squire had been affected by the gentleness and earnestness with which the minister had counselled one who sorely needed comfort; he was struck with the unaffected humility of the man, and the absence of every thing like arrogance in his deportment. And when, as they rode along, Mr. Worthy expressed his regret at not seeing him among his flock for a long time, the old man came right out in the words already recited, and asked with all sincerity, "My dear sir, why can't our ministers preach in your pulpits?"

The conversation proceeded somewhat after this fashion :

"I am glad to hear you ask that question. I am often pained at the thought that good people think hardly of us for what is called our exclusiveness, and I wish I could oftener have an opportunity of explaining the position of the Episcopal Church. But, Squire, I cannot answer your question in five minutes; if we discuss this matter at all, we must have a long talk about it. Perhaps I cannot persuade you that we are right,

but I feel very certain that I can show you we are not without very good reasons in keeping to ourselves."

The Squire. "Well, talk away. We have a long ride before us, and I am always willing to hear what people have to say for themselves. I'm a blunt man, Parson, and I hope you won't take offence; but nobody can persuade me it is right for any set of people to make themselves out better than others."

The Minister. "I was about to propose that you should tell me why you think so hardly of other ministers not being invited into our pulpits. That will clear the way for me. Your chief objection, then, is, that it looks as if we thought too much of ourselves."

Squire. "That is just it."

Minister. "It is the rule of charity to impute to men the best motives we can. You ought not to think this of us, if any other reasonable account can be given. Squire, you have not seen many Episcopalians; but you do know a few: you have turned over the leaves of the Prayer-book a good deal. Do you really think that our religion, as you have thus seen it, is particularly self-righteous? 'God, I thank thee that I am not as other men'—do you think the Church teaches us to talk that way?"

Squire. "No, I don't say that; but if you do not think yourselves better than us, why can't our ministers preach in your pulpits?"

Minister. "There was a great mistake made once about this matter. What you say of us, is exactly what Korah and his company said of Moses and Aaron. There were men in the camp just as good as the members of that family: perhaps better. He complained bitterly that Moses and Aaron kept the sacred offices to themselves, whereas all the congregation was holy. No Episcopalian, Squire, has ever been more berated for his exclusiveness,—more reproached with thinking too much of himself, and despising his brethren, than were Moses and Aaron."

They had stopped just here at a little brook, and while their horses were drinking, Mr. Worthy read the verse to which he had alluded, out of his pocket-Bible: "And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?"

"Now you know," continued Mr. Worthy, "that this man Moses was the meekest of men: he felt no envy when, as in the case of Eldad

and Medad, the spirit of prophecy fell on others as well as himself. He did not deserve the reproach of thinking his house better than the other families of Israel, for he was but carrying out God's ordinance, that no stranger which was not of the house of Levi should come near to offer incense. Is it not possible, now, that our exclusiveness may, like that of Moses, be a matter of principle, and not an evidence of pride?"

Squire. "I suppose, then, you mean to say, that you can't help yourselves: you have a canon, as they call it, that ties you up. If that is the case, I must say it is very bad law, and you ought to change it. Here comes a pious man, whose preaching the Lord blesses to the conversion of souls, and you cannot ask him to preach for you. You ought to change that law."

Minister. "No, I do not mean that: I should despise myself if, instead of a sound reason, I were to give so pitiful an excuse. No, Squire, we take our stand, like Moses, on the Word of God. The law would be wiped out at once if we did not all believe that it ought to stand."

"A rule is one thing, a reason is quite another. I hope I can give you a reason. But before I go any further, let me be careful to say, that whether our ministers are better or worse than others has nothing to do with the question.

"If experience has taught me any thing certainly, I do seem to know that sincerity and goodness are found in all religious persuasions—and while I am determined never to excuse error, I hope never to withhold from anybody the credit he deserves because he is in error.

"Squire, I once knew a Unitarian whose whole life was one long series of charitable and self-denying deeds. I have heard my own people tell how, in time of pestilence, Romanists stood in the breach and faced the destroyer. I have met in wild hills a Methodist preacher, whose untiring zeal and simple-hearted fervor made me blush for my own deficiencies. I did not love Unitarianism, or Romanism, or Methodism any better; but I loved and honored the men.

"As for your ministers, if the question were whether I were a holier man than they, you may be sure I would often sit at their feet and learn. Yes, I have sometimes seen an old servant who, if that were the test, ought to preach to me, rather than I to him."

Squire. "Of course you could not let a Unitarian or a Roman Catholic preach for you: they do not hold the same doctrine. But your doctrines and the Methodists' are almost the same: does it look civil and kind for you to treat a good, pious minister with no respect?"

Minister. "The Methodists would hardly agree that our doctrine is the same. If so, why did they leave us? But, however that is, politeness has nothing to do with the matter. Prayers, and sacraments, and sermons were not intended to be made occasions of compliment. I wonder what you would think, were our circuit judge to make a bow to some 'Philadelphia lawyer,' who happened to be present, and insist upon his presiding over the court. We hold all these to be matters of principle, not of ceremony, politeness, or kindness."

Squire. "Well, then, what is your reason, or your principle? I believe in people carrying out their principles, when they have any."

"I will answer you then, plainly. We believe in the unity of the Church: that is, that according to the Bible there ought to be in all the world one Church, and one only. We do not feel ourselves at liberty to encourage or favor the dividing up of Christian people into many sects and parties. Do you think, from your reading of the Bible, that our Lord and His apostles intended to establish many churches?"

"I cannot say that I have ever thought much about it."

"But surely you remember how earnestly the Saviour prayed that His people might all be one;

and how St. Paul warned Christian people against divisions and differences: he says plainly there ought to be 'no schism in the body,' and that we ought to be 'perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.' The Church instituted by the Saviour was one; and the Christians we read of in the Bible were not members of ever so many denominations."

"I suppose that must have been the way. But still it seems strange. Do you suppose that there was no difference or discussion about election, and other doctrines?"

"I do not doubt that there was; I may say we know that there was. People differed, but they did not divide."

"I do not understand you."

"What I mean is this. All the Christian people in those days agreed to receive the Bible as the word of God, and when they were baptized, confessed their faith, either in the Apostles' Creed, or in some simple formula which expressed the doctrine of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Besides this, they submitted to the ministry set over them by the apostles, and observed the two sacraments which our Lord instituted. The bond of union was a triple cord: the faith, the ministry, the sacraments. A Christian, in early times, would find these the same wherever

he went, except among heretics. The forms of worship were various, and there were differences in the manner of stating doctrines; but in these great things all united. The Church required agreement in the essentials of religion; in matters not essential she allowed people to differ. You remember that St. Paul and St. Peter disagreed once: or, which is more to the purpose, St. Paul and St. Barnabas had a sharp contention about a question of expediency. But they did not, for that reason, establish two Churches. They parted asunder, and pursued their labors in different parts of the same Church. No, Squire, there is no warrant in the Bible for more than one Church."

"And do you all claim to be that same Church?"

"Yes, we do. At a very early time the faith was carried to England. A Church was founded there, which, like the Church of other countries, received the Creed, the apostolic ministry, the sacraments. The English Church has kept all these, and transmitted them to us. None of them have been lost. In all essential things we claim to stand just where the early Christians stood. These things, we say, came to us from Christ: we dare not alter them. If any people choose to form a society with a new creed, a new

ministry, or new sacraments, we cannot consent to become responsible for their doings."

"But, Mr. Worthy," proceeded the Squire, "what difference does it make, so the Gospel is preached, and souls are saved? If the end is gained, it does not matter much how men accomplish it. I do believe it is a great thing to have different denominations. Some men seem to be born Methodists, and some Presbyterians; and when they look around, each man can find a Church that suits his notion."

"My dear friend, that last argument is not sound. The great word of the Gospel is, 'Believe.' God does not set before us a number of different religions, that we may choose one after our own fancy. He tells us instead, that we are blind and foolish creatures; that we must receive what He reveals, and not what we would have to be true. If a man chooses a religion, he is very likely to select that which is the worst for him. A presumptuous man will choose a presumptuous religion; a stern man one that will add to his gloom; and so of the rest. The argument proves too much: it suggests that Universalism or Unitarianism may be a matter of constitution and temperament.

"And it does make a difference how good is done. The Church has to preach the Gospel not

only to-day, and to-morrow, but while the world stands. She has many a battle yet to fight with Satan and his hosts.

“ How many a battle has been lost ; how many a gallant army cut to pieces, because one regiment, eager to charge, disobeyed orders, and broke the line of battle ! Only think, since you were young, how the leading denominations of the country have split into fragments ! Are these scattered sticks as strong as when bound together in a fagot ? Look at our little town ! One minister could take care of all the people, and one church could hold them ; but for lack of unity, how weak and ill-sustained are all the services of religion ! ”

They rode on in silence a little way, and the Squire replied that he was not satisfied about that matter. He was not a learned man, he said, and it did not follow because he was silenced, that he was therefore convinced. Presently he advanced another difficulty.

“ You say yours is an old Church : now the histories say that Henry VIII. began it.”

“ I do not find any such thing in history. I read about the Reformation in England. Every history I know of tells the same story : not that a new Church was made in the time of Henry VIII., but that in his days, and after-

wards, the Church of England was reformed."

"I cannot see much difference. One year there was a Roman Catholic Church, with Pope, and Latin services,—with monks, and purgatory, and all that ; and another year there is a Church of England with none of these things. That looks very much like throwing down an old Church and putting a new one in its place."

"Let me explain. A family has long lived in an old house. The walls are firm, the timbers sound ; but the windows are stopped up, the roof leaks, the fireplaces smoke, the weather-boarding is torn off.

"Now, if the man moves out of doors, and pulls the house down ; if, using some part of the materials, and adding much more, he goes on to build, I should call that a new house.

"But suppose he begins by saying, this house is my own. I will no longer pay rent to the man who has claimed to be its owner and my master. And then he and his children go to work : they do not forsake it for another house : all the family arrangements go on as usual. The fire daily burns on the hearth, and not a meal is interrupted : but carefully and steadily they go on, day by day, restoring the house to the same soundness and comfort which it once possessed.

To-day, a leak is mended ; to-morrow, a window that had been bricked up is thrown open ; the next, some cracked plastering is torn down, so as to show the old oak wainscoting which had always been there. You would say the man had repaired the house.

“Or, to set it in another light. The Roman Catholic Church, as we call it, consists of a number of national churches, all agreeing to acknowledge the supremacy of the Pope.

“Now suppose that the people of the French Church should begin to see their errors and superstitions ; that a great council should be called of its rulers ; that these should say deliberately, ‘and by a solemn vote, ‘The Bishop of Rome is not our master, and we hereby refuse to obey his authority.’ And then they proceed to examine their doctrines and usages, and year by year cautiously throw aside or alter, until at last the Church is purified : and, all this time, the churches continue to be opened, the same ministers officiate, and the people accept the changes as they were made. You would not taunt them with making a new Church. You would praise them for their prudence, and their honesty in reforming what they had.”

“Was that the way they went to work in England ?”

"It was. Before the Reformation we see the Church very much corrupted, chiefly by additions to the true faith ; and in a sad state of subjection to a foreign Bishop. Many of her children had protested against these things ; but she seemed too ignorant and too weak to retrieve herself. And then a merciful Providence interfered. Printing was discovered, diffusing knowledge in a wonderful degree. And then that wicked Henry, for reasons of his own, became weary of the Pope's authority, and so the Church, with the help of the State, was enabled to assert her own independence ; her right to regulate her own concerns."

"And was there not a separation right off?"

"Not a bit of it. The Church services went on just as if nothing had happened ; there was no shock or convulsion. Nobody knew or thought that the old house was pulled down, and the people turned into the fields."

"I thought the whole doctrine was changed, and that the Roman people went off to themselves."

"It is a mistake, a great mistake, to suppose that the Church was entirely reformed under Henry. Why, at his death, the Church still held to prayers and masses for the dead, the invocation of saints, transubstantiation, and communion in one kind.

"The great point gained in Henry's time was, the Church's declaration of independence. Then she began cautiously and slowly to reform. During the reign of Edward VI. great improvement was made: then came Bloody Mary, and every thing went backwards; and at last, under Elizabeth, the Church fairly took her stand, and established her doctrines."

"When did the division take place?"

"Not until the eleventh year of Queen Elizabeth: it was not until then that the Romanists forsook the Church, and set up rival altars."

"All this is very new to me. I thought that old Henry, when the Pope would not let him divorce his wife, rose up in anger, and made a new Church, new Bishops, and new every thing."

"No, Squire, that is not the true account. But I can tell you who did upset old things, and make new Churches—Luther and Calvin were the men. And see the difference. Their churches have been constantly dividing, and departing from the ancient faith, until many of them are almost infidel. The Church of England still stands firm and united, and has never wavered in her allegiance to the Son of God."

"Tell me now," pursued Squire Candid, "do you think that our preachers are doing no good?"

"I believe they are doing much good and

some evil. What a man soweth that shall he also reap: the crop must be like the seed. They do bear abroad much good seed,—the doctrine of a blessed Saviour who died for all: but they bear another sort of seed as well. And in the result I see tares and wheat springing up together; Christian virtues and tempers, but mingled with them much irreverence, many wrong notions, and no little abuse of private judgment."

"Do you expect, by keeping to yourselves, that in the end all the different denominations will give up their peculiarities and come over to you?"

"I have no expectations about it. Results are God's, duties are ours. Whether Christian people are to continue in this divided and distracted state until the end of the world, or whether God will reunite them in the bonds of fellowship, is more than I can tell. Sometimes I hope for the best. I remember a sect called the Donatists, in early times, which counted its bishops by hundreds, and which endured through several centuries, and at last was absorbed into the Church. It may be the like will happen again. But, in any event, my chief concern is to do my own duty: to omit nothing in my power that may hinder division and that may promote unity.

"But, my friend, if Christian people should grow weary of their divisions and begin to look for a platform of agreement, where can they find it, except in the Church of England and in its American descendant? For instance, an open Bible would be the first condition. The Episcopal Church says, here it is: we gave it long ago, in a noble translation, to the Anglo-Saxon race: she reads it as well as preaches it, and exacts of her ministers a pledge to teach nothing as necessary to salvation, except what is therein contained. Her services are devout and spiritual; her sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution. Her doors are open to all persons who receive the great doctrines of religion as contained in the Apostles' Creed. And then, since there must be some ministry or other, and no one doubts that ours is regular, and since it is commended by the unbroken practice and custom of centuries upon centuries, if men agree at all, they must agree on that. But, as I said, our business is to keep the Church as Christ made it; to put no obstacle in the way of those who desire to enter it; to impose no terms save those which our Lord imposed. Then, whatever happens, we are not to blame."

"So, then, you unchurch all other denominations?"

"I do not know what you mean by that word ; but I can tell you what the Episcopal Church says about other bodies of Christians. In one place she says, 'the Church of Rome has erred, not only in living and ceremonies, but also in matters of faith.' In another place, that 'the riches and goods of Christian men are not common, as certain Anabaptists do falsely boast.' And then one of her laws is to this effect :

"It is evident unto all men, diligently reading Holy Scripture and ancient Authors, that, from the Apostles' time, there have been these Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church,—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. Which offices were evermore had in such reverend Estimation, that no man might presume to execute any of them, except he were first called, tried, examined, and known to have such qualities as are requisite for the same ; and also by public Prayer, with Imposition of Hands, were approved and admitted thereunto by lawful Authority. And therefore to the intent that these Orders may be continued, and reverently used and esteemed in this Church, no man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful Bishop, Priest, or Deacon, in this Church, or suffered to execute any of the said Functions, except he be called, tried, examined, and admitted thereunto, according to the form hereafter following, or hath had Episcopal Consecration or Ordination."

"This is all she has to say about other communions. If I understand her doctrine, it amounts to this : There is an ancient order of things established by Christ and His apostles.

Our own duty, and a just regard to the best interests of religion, forbid any innovation upon that old order. The Church will not countenance any new arrangements. And as for those who have made new Churches, she utters no sentence against them, but leaves them to answer for themselves to their Maker and their Judge.

"But, about this question of unchurching other people. You cannot ask us to concede more than you claim.

"Now, you say that you have a Church. I ask, what do you understand by a Church? You will say that it is a society founded by some man, or established by the joint action of a number of men, for the purpose of securing sympathy and mutual aid in the Christian life, and for carrying the Gospel to impenitent men. It has ministers or preachers, appointed according to rules agreed upon. You meet stately for religious service, and have many pious people in your number.

"Now, all this we freely grant. These characters belong to a great many bodies of Christians. In this sense you have a Church.

"But, since you do not claim to have a Church in the sense of a society founded by Christ himself, with ministers regularly, and by an unbro-

ken line, descended from the apostles: a Church which is not a voluntary society, and which, if lost from the world, men could never reconstruct; of course, you cannot expect us to say that in that sense you have a Church."

"Nay," answered the Squire, "men can make a Church. Suppose a number of Christian people cast away on a desert island: could not they ordain ministers and make a Church?"

"In your sense of the word they could. In our meaning they could not. We think, that without an apostolic ministry, duly transmitted, there can be no Church, although there may be a religious society. Did you ever hear the story of Pitcairn's Island?"

"I believe I have. It was settled by the mutineers of an English ship, the *Bounty*."

"Yes; and it is a case in point. When discovered, many years afterwards, they were found to be an orderly, Christian community. Prayers were held and a sermon read every Sunday. Old John Adams acted as their religious teacher; but he never pretended to be a minister, or to found a Church. They did the best they could without a Church, rather than pretend to that which men cannot do. And at last Providence sent a minister to baptize them, a bishop to confirm them, and a pastor to feed them.

"I say, then, we grant all you ask. We do not deny that all of you have churches, as you understand it. But you can scarce expect us to mean that you are eighteen hundred years old, and that you have an apostolic succession which you do not believe in."

"But do you not think, Mr. Worthy, that these divisions have raised the standard of religion when the Church was in a low state?"

"No, I do not. Every now and then some man sees that Church people are not as holy as they ought to be. He thinks the fault is in the machinery, and that must be mended. He gathers a few zealous followers and founds a sect.

"Now, all these sects are noted for their zeal while they are small and their members are few in number. It was so with the Puritans, and with the early Methodists. But as the circle enlarges, and the novelty wears off, the same causes begin to operate; the people become lukewarm and worldly. At last a new experiment is thought of, and a small party withdraws itself to run the same career. The fact is, that no organization, no laws, no mere system, can sustain a Church in its saintliness. There needs a spiritual life in the hearts of the people. And if the Church of England was sound in doctrine, but cold in spirit, the true plan was to make up

the fires in every chimney; not to build a new house and try to warm that."

"I am willing to admit," replied the Squire to all this, "that, taking you on your own grounds, you have a good deal to say for yourselves. But I should hate to be in a Church which would not let my sympathies flow out towards true Christians of all names and professions."

"There you are mistaken, my good sir. I love every truly pious man; I claim a brother in every man who shows the image of his Master. Why, when you submitted so patiently to the injury done you the other day by your nephew, and suffered him to tell his own tale uncontradicted, rather than make a difficulty (by accident I heard all about it), do you suppose I was not proud of you and of our common principles? I love all good people, but I do not love their faults. And I consider it a fault, or at least a great mistake, that while they labor for their Master's kingdom, they do not labor in the way of His appointment. Nay, I make many excuses: as I look upon the divided hosts of good people, I think what a responsibility rests on those who led them away from the ancient Church. Many of them, I would trust all of them, are doing the best they know how. The

child follows the example of his parent; men hear good people say it makes no difference what Church a man belongs to; and it is hard, very hard, to make them see that the Church question is one of importance.

“Judge us, then, as gently as you can. We are fighting for a great principle,—the unity and integrity of Christ’s Holy Church; for one Church rather than the two or three hundred which divide the people of these United States. If you can show me good reason to believe that I am wrong, that Christ approves of this state of things, I am ready to give up. But if division is a sin and a scandal, the reproach of religion, the formidable obstacle in the way of evangelizing the world, then you must not think hardly of us who cleave to the old paths and cry aloud for unity.”

Just then they approached the village, and their paths diverged. The Squire checked his horse for a moment, and responded in a kindly tone:

“Well, Mr. Worthy, these are troublesome questions. I am right tired sometimes of seeing so much argument and controversy. I wish we were all in one Church, sure enough, although I cannot say that yours or mine either is the true one. I suppose we must live and let live.”

Good-bye was said, and the conversation ended.

And now, dear reader, whoever you may be, will you not grant that the exclusiveness of the Church is not capricious or unkind?

You may doubt the correctness of the principles we lay down, or the accuracy of the statements we set forth. Yet, surely, it must be allowed that these are not without foundation in truth and fact, enough to exempt us from the charge of caprice, folly, and uncharitableness. At least, give us this credit,—we have made no new regulations to cast disrespect upon denominations of modern origin. There is no recent law forbidding non-Episcopal ministers to officiate in the Church. In this matter the Church, before the Reformation, and since that time, has always uttered the same voice. At least, in the words of the good old Squire, “Let us live, and let live.”

Tracts for Missionary Use.
No. 4.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE APOSTOLIC
SUCCESSION

A WHOLESOME DOCTRINE AND VERY FULL OF COMFORT.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1859,

BY DANIEL DANA, JR.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern
District of New York.

THE DOCTRINE OF APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION,
A WHOLESOME DOCTRINE, AND VERY FULL OF COMFORT.

In every well-ordered community, great and small, there must be subordination of rank, there must be some legitimate and well-recognized authority. The Church of Christ is no exception to this general statement.

In its first beginning, our Lord himself was its earthly Governor. He superintended all its affairs, designated its teachers, and authorized fit persons to share His earthly ministry.

When He was about to ascend into heaven, He left not His Church without constitution, laws, and an authorized executive. He imposed the two Sacraments as of perpetual obligation ; He declared the terms and conditions on which men might become citizens of His kingdom ; and, furthermore, He invested certain persons with authority to govern His Church, and provided for the transmission of that authority throughout all time.

"He stood and said, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

Power had been given to the Son of man ; He was now about to confer power ; not all His power, but such part of it as could be intrusted to sin-born mortals.

His Father had sent Him ; He in turn sends the apostles. He bade them go preach and baptize. "He breathed on them and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." He gave them power to remit and to retain sins ; and He promised to be with them (surely not with the eleven men, for presently they all fell on sleep ; but with the apostles of all ages) always, even to the end of the world.

These apostles were the chief pastors of the Church. Their number was enlarged by the admission of Matthias, of Paul, of Barnabas, and others. Themselves bishops at large over the whole Church, they committed the office of chief pastor, by the imposition of hands on many others. When the Book of Revelation was written, the seven Churches of Asia had each its apostle, or angel, who was held responsible for the whole flock committed to him. In a little while the whole Church was supplied with such rulers, deriving their orders from the apostles, but modestly preferring to be called

bishops, rather than to adopt the earlier title of apostle or angel.

And so from apostle to angel, and angel to bishop, and bishop to bishop, our Lord's high commission has been conveyed. The ministers of the Church are thus descended from the apostles by an unbroken spiritual lineage. The gift is not impaired by the lapse of time, and the priest of God has a visible and external authority to minister the Word and sacraments which can come in no other way than through this apostolic succession, and which is his sufficient warrant in demanding that we receive him as one set over us in the Lord.

Such is the doctrine of the apostolic succession.

Perchance some reader may glance over these pages with impatience. He has no patience with this and the like discussions. He would fain study the doctrines of justification and the atonement, of faith and repentance: something which bears on the conversion of sinners, which conduces to evangelical piety. What, he asks, is the practical use of this doctrine? What profit in these vexing questions about orders and Church government?

If such a reader will follow on with us, we propose to accept his own view of the matter

and argue from it. We think it can be proven that this doctrine is wholesome and full of comfort; that it involves the best interests of religion, and that it cannot be rejected by any one without injury and loss.

In entering upon this inquiry, let us apply certain tests of doctrine to which no manner of exception can be taken. We will borrow those by which a good man, some fifty years ago, desired that his book might be tried. We say, then, of this doctrine, as he said of his book, "Does it uniformly tend

To HUMBLE THE SINNER?

To EXALT THE SAVIOUR?

To PROMOTE HOLINESS?

If in one single instance it lose sight of any of these points, let it be condemned without mercy."*

And now let us ask,

1. DOES THIS DOCTRINE HUMBLE THE SINNER?

Nothing so much humbles the sinner as the thought that his reward is not of debt but of grace: that his pardon and salvation are the free and undeserved gifts of a God of mercy.

We could not find a victim, but God provided himself a Lamb to take away our sins.

* Life of Simeon, Amer. ed., p. 108.

We have not turned and prepared ourselves by our own natural strength to faith and calling upon God: the first motion that way was the doing of the Holy Spirit, and in every subsequent effort we have been dependent on His help.

Now it humbles the sinner, deeply humbles him, to consider further, that the Gospel was brought to him, not sought out by him. He did not make the first advances towards reconciliation, but, while he was at enmity with his Maker, there came to him one who said, and truly said, “I speak not in my own name: I am an ambassador from God, formally commissioned to make a treaty with you. It is as though God did speak by my mouth. I pray you, in Christ’s stead, be reconciled to God.”

Did it not humble Saul of Tarsus to know that the Lord Jesus Christ himself appeared to him in the way, spake to him in the Hebrew tongue, and called him by his name? Did it not humble Peter to know that an angel from the throne of God was sent to open his prison doors? And shall it not humble us to think, that Almighty God, not content with uttering general invitations and promises to all men, sends a special messenger, an honorable messenger (“Touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no

harm !"), to look *me* in the face, to "tell the disciples AND PETER," to assure me personally and individually, that the Lord is ready to take me, even *me*, back to His favor ?

The writer remembers well an instance wherein the power of this argument was fully proven.

A sick man, and surely declining to the grave, was much troubled in conscience. His Bible for many weeks had lain at hand, and often he asked to hear its precious words ; he prayed much, and seemed deeply to repent ; but still, merciful as he believed the Saviour to be, he could not believe that the mercy was for him ; he could not be persuaded to renounce all his guilty doubts, and to cast himself into the arms of Divine compassion.

The minister had counselled much and entreated often. On one occasion, after they had sat in silence for a while, the minister took up the Holy Book and bade the sick man listen. Slowly and deliberately he read that portion of the 8th chapter of Romans which begins at the 31st verse. Grand words are they for a mortal to speak or hear :

"I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able

to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

After a pause, he said,

"Would you like to be thus persuaded?"

The sick man answered with a mournful smile.

"And you must be thus persuaded," pursued the minister. "It is a dishonor to Almighty God not to believe His message.

"It is time that you should come to a conclusion. I speak now with authority, and not as the scribes. I am an ambassador from God, commissioned from above, and set apart to this office as Aaron was to his. I am sent by divine appointment to your bedside, as surely as God sent Philip to the Ethiopian. You have heard my message. Repent, believe, and be baptized.

"Now, therefore, advise and see what answer I shall return to Him that sent me. God declares He is reconciled to you; will you agree to be reconciled to Him?

"Furthermore, I am empowered not only to treat, but to covenant with you. As a priest of the living God, and while I act within the limits of my instructions, that which I loose on earth is loosed in heaven.

"You do truly repent you of your sins; you do heartily confess your ill desert; you do despair of safety save in Christ; you are steadfast-

ly purposed to keep His laws. Is this your mind and purpose, as God knoweth, who reads the heart?"

"It is, it is," replied the penitent.

"It remains, then, for you to surrender your doubts of God's mercy; to accept frankly His proffered hand of reconciliation; to give yourself up to Him in a formal covenant. This is what you must do in baptism; and while you thus do, Christ for His part, through me, His unworthy but authorized representative, does pronounce and convey to you, solemnly, formally, and certainly, the assurance, Go in peace, thy sins be forgiven thee!"

The next day the sick man was received into the ark of Christ's Church.

"My dear friend," said he, "I thank you. I seem to know more of the love of Christ that passeth knowledge. Blessed Saviour! not satisfied to bestow pardon on the sinner who asks it; but He sends me such a message, and such a messenger, that I cannot doubt His mercy is for me."

It is by heaping benefits upon us that God crushes our pride and melts our obstinacy. The penitent is humbled by the thought that, vile as he is, his Father is willing to receive him back to His bosom. But lo! while he hesitates, there

comes a special messenger, a steward in the house, who conveys to him a personal invitation, and a special promise !

How can such condescending goodness fail to deepen his humility and to excite the cry, “What is man that Thou art mindful of him?”

We are now to try this doctrine by another test.

2. DOES IT EXALT THE SAVIOUR ?

It may be that some mother reads this tract. You have often spoken to your child of the love of the Saviour. At what point did your narrative come to an end ?

You rehearsed how the Son of God was born of an humble virgin, and submitted to a life of poverty and pain ; that He suffered on the cross for us, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree ; that He rose again for our justification, and ascended into heaven ; and that from thence He sent the Holy Ghost to be the comforter of His people. You say how gracious and merciful was He in all this ! And how thankful should we be that He inspired holy men to write all these things in a volume, so that a faithful record might come to us. You pause, and add no more.

Listen, while a Church mother prolongs the story.

“This is not all. Our Master did not leave

His holy doctrine to float down to us as it might: He established a Church to keep it, and convey it. He made it the duty of certain men to preach it to every creature under heaven. He gave His apostles the right to preach and baptize in His place; and provided that they should convey the same right to others; and so there is a long line of ministers, each one ordained by Him that went before, until the Saviour himself is reached.

“ When the Saviour was in the world, good people were not satisfied merely to hear Him preach. The penitent desired to hear Him say to her, for herself, thy sins are forgiven. The mother desired that He should take her little child in His arms, and bless it.

“ Now, see how considerate and kind the Lord is! Besides the Holy Bible, we have holy messengers sent to us from God, and speaking in the name of Christ. When such an one took you in baptism, and blessed you, it was through Jesus Christ’s commission. When such an one in the Church stands up, and declares and pronounces pardon to all who truly repent, it is by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ that the absolution is pronounced. Our Saviour came to *seek* as well as to save; and you must be thankful to Him not only for making your peace with God,

but for seeking you by His minister, and adopting you into His family."

Say, would not such a lesson sink deep into a child's heart, and enlarge his views of the Saviour's boundless and considerate mercy?

And when to all this is added some account of the wonderful providences by which the Church has been sustained, and its orders perpetuated, in spite of heresies and persecutions, reverence and gratitude are more enhanced. Pleasant is it to read the record of sweet words that were spoken in olden times to men of a generation past and gone; but, oh, how pleasant to hear them addressed to me myself, by one who speaks for Christ!

Compare, again, the opposing doctrines on this subject.

We all agree that Christ himself launched the ship upon the waters, appointed its officers, and laid down the course to be pursued. But presently we begin to differ.

Some of us are bold to say, that although the ship has been tossed upon the waves, driven of fierce winds, and sometimes almost ready to sink, Christ has ever watched it from afar, and, in its great emergencies, has come to its relief. We say its timbers are all staunch, its charts are not lost, its pilots are no volunteers, but officers

chosen of the Lord. We fear not to say to drowning men, This is the Lord's own ark ; it has ridden out every storm of eighteen centuries, and shall surely reach the haven.

Dear reader, what do you believe ? That "they ran the ship aground, and the forepart stuck fast and remained unmoveable, while the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves?" and that "the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship . . . escaped safe to land?" and that on this desert island each little company must make up its little fire of sticks, and provide its own shelter ?

Can you reconcile yourself to believe that the ship in which the apostles and early Christians embarked all together, has sunk like lead beneath the waters, and that our hope of escape is in such vessels as we can patch up out of its fragments, or in some ship of Alexandria which steers on our course ?

Surely it is more honorable to the Saviour to believe that we have now a Church, not merely like that which he established, but the very same Church ; and that the gift which Timothy received by the laying on of the hands of Paul, did not die with him, but was communicated to another, and another, and another, until it was conferred by direct succession on him who signs the cross

on the brow of your children, and who extends to you the bread and wine, the tokens of deathless love, the pledges of abiding grace.

There is still another test by which we have proposed to try this doctrine:

3. DOES IT PROMOTE HOLINESS ?

The sanctity of God's people depends very much upon the zeal and fidelity of the ministers who are entrusted with the care of souls. Their trumpet must give no uncertain sound. They must "speak, and exhort, and reprove, *with all authority.*" If they assume the attitude of mere disputers, and volunteer advisers, their words have no more weight than those of any private persons ; whereas, a just realization of their official character, as men of God, prophets of the Most High, ambassadors for Christ, imparts to their message a dignity and weight which else it could not have. The minister who believes in his inmost soul, "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me;" who views his office as a solemn trust confided to him by Christ Himself, has every inducement to show himself "dutiful and thankful unto that Lord, who has placed him in so high a dignity," and may well be "bold in God to speak the Gospel of God with much contention."

We often hear ministers who have not this

succession (and who indeed believe not in it) admonishing their hearers that the message is from God. They rely upon an inward call of the Holy Spirit, as giving them a right to speak in God's behalf.

Now this inward call is something that cannot be proven: we know that many have falsely pretended to it. The minister who puts this forth as his authority, requires of the people to believe two things: viz., that he is sincere, and that he is not mistaken.

And, again, see how insecure is his own confidence! To be called to an office is one thing; to be endued with it is another. How can the question fail sometimes to come into his mind, Have I received not only God's call, but God's commission? And in those seasons of anxiety and disquietude which happen to all the saints of God, when they fear that they have been mistaken or self-deceived, where is the warrant on which to rely in appearing before sinful men on God's behalf?

Now it is freely granted that no man ought to undertake the ministry, or can hope to discharge its sacred functions well and safely, unless he trusts that "he is inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon him this office and ministration to serve God for the promoting of His

glory, and the edifying of His people ;” but trusting that he has been thus moved by the Holy Ghost, what unspeakable satisfaction may he find in the thought that he is duly invested with Christ’s authority, and holds a staff of office transmitted through a long line of bishops and apostles from Him who said to Peter, “Feed my sheep.”

As he puts on his sacred vestment, he considers—I am to bless the people in God’s name, not in mine own. He takes a little babe in his surpliced arms, and while he feels his personal unworthiness thus to embrace Christ’s little ones, he reflects that this sacrament—forasmuch as I do it not in my own name, but in Christ’s, and do minister it by His commission and authority—is effectual, and the grace of God’s gift is not diminished by my unworthiness. In the pulpit he may be sorely troubled by the reflection, “Woe is me ! for I am a man of unclean lips,” and almost repent the temerity which led him to undertake so weighty a trust. But then he remembers his commission, “Take thou authority to execute the office of a priest.”

His office is one which cannot be assumed or laid aside at pleasure. No private person can perform its functions. He has no choice ; necessity is laid upon him ; woe is unto him if he

preach not the Gospel. He remembers Christ's promise, and, it may be, offers his silent petition thus :

" O holy Jesus, who hast purchased to Thyself an universal Church, and hast promised to be with the Ministers of Apostolic Succession to the end of the world ; be graciously pleased to bless the ministry and service of him who is appointed to offer the sacrifices of prayer and praise to Thee in this house, which is called by Thy Name. May the words of his mouth and the meditation of his heart be always acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. *Amen.*"

Ah, then ! when his sinful self is forgotten, and the sense of a divine commission thrills through every vein, the minister rises above the natural level of the man ; his message, else cold and feeble, is instinct with life and warmth, and the people receive it, " not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh " in them that believe.

So we claim that the doctrine of the apostolic succession tends directly to create a just sense of responsibility in the ministers of the Church ; it quickens their zeal, it animates their hopes, it allays their disquietude. No argument is needed to prove that every thing which promotes the efficiency of the clergy, promotes holiness among the people.

But this is not all : leaving this view apart,

we claim that the recognition of this doctrine is directly promotive of holiness in individual cases. See how it fosters the Christian graces of reverence and obedience.

It promotes *reverence*. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. A child cannot love his father or profit by his instructions, unless he holds him in profound veneration. Even thus we may search the world over, and we cannot find a well-proportioned, lovely Christian character, unless it is pervaded by sentiments of deep and awful reverence for God and all things sacred.

What do we often witness in worshipping assemblies? Men walk up the aisle with their hats on; young people enter as they would go into some public hall, and smile and whisper away the moments before service. Only when the text is announced does the business of the day seem to have been begun. The minister hears afterwards that “he made a right good argument to-day;” or perhaps, at the very door, some critic tells him, “Brother, I do not agree with you; you did not put that matter in the right point of view.”

Every reader knows this picture is true: irreverence is the sin of our age, and destroys our people’s susceptibility to religious impressions.

Persons of all denominations complain of the disorder and annoyance occasioned by thoughtless and ill-mannered attendants.

Now, let the minister and his people accept the doctrine which we urge, and the surest remedy is provided. The clergyman himself is solemnized by the reflection that he is about to exercise an office the most honorable and weighty, an office conveyed to him from Christ, and higher than any which man can give. Grave is his demeanor, reverent his very attitude, sound is his speech. In such a man you will discern no levity, no trifling. Fanciful theories, private opinions will not form the staple of his sermon. He speaks God's Word, simply, earnestly, and with the least possible mixture of human error.

Where this is so the people cannot fail to catch the like spirit, for reverence is contagious. The Church becomes in their thought a holy place, whither God's own priest summons them to assemble. The prayers become as incense, or as an evening sacrifice, holy offerings to God; and the sermon is no discourse of a lecturer, but a message from God through a chosen servant. Who does not know that he would be a holier man, if, when he goes to Church, he could drive away all low and common thoughts, and fully

, realize this is God's house wherein I stand, God's ambassador to whom I listen, God's words that fall from yonder desk?

And next we mention the grace of *obedience*.

Our Saviour tells us that we must "hear the Church." He solemnly declared, that to reject His minister is to reject Himself. A spirit of respectful obedience to our spiritual pastors is an important element in Christian character. In the epistle to the Hebrews it is plainly written, "*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves.*"

Few persons are mindful of this duty. The many are willing for the minister to preach to them, but they deem it an intrusion, an unwarrantable liberty for him to do more than preach in general terms. Let him, in private, as need shall require and opportunity shall serve, exhort and comfort, let him rebuke and admonish, as a father doth his children, and he will most likely be blamed for exceeding his duty. We often hear people speak lightly of being "turned out of the Church:" some one man pronounced an unfavorable judgment, and some other man can be found to reverse it. Insubordination in the Church leads to insubordination in the State and in the family. The fruits of it are visible in the thousands of rude, ill-mannered, ungodly chil-

dren who are growing up under the very shadow of our churches.

Now, if you look to your pastor as your divinely appointed guide and teacher, responsible for your safety, you cannot refuse him the privilege of counselling you. It will seem as natural for him to say "that is not a right temper for you to indulge," as for your physician to warn you "that fever must not be permitted to run on."

In those matters which he has a right to decide, you will submit cheerfully as to just authority; and his mere advice will be listened to with meekness and respect, although he may fail to convince you.

This belief, moreover, strengthens our *faith*, and enlarges *charity*. It forbids us to think of religion as an unsettled changing thing, on which men are forever making experiments; or that the Church which we love is confined to one congregation or to one small sect.

These men, we are reminded, are the servants of the most high God; regular descendants and successors of the apostolic ministry. Their office is not new or self-undertaken. Their Gospel is the same ancient faith once delivered to the saints. You need not be driven about by every wind of doctrine. This faith has stood so long,

has been so carefully transmitted that you may be sure of its truth.

And as for the Church, it is not a narrow, modern, local institution; nor is it an unreal, invisible castle in the clouds. It is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. It consists of all the faithful, in all times and countries, who have accepted the faith of God's Word, and received the sacraments at the hands of His lawful ministers.

This bond of fellowship as members of God's one own Church tends to draw us more nearly together; each holy martyr becomes, as it were, of kin to us, and the missionary beyond the sea, and his convert from heathenism, are our own brethren.

As for those who reject this ministry, we do not surrender our Christian love and sympathy for them. We do not cease to admire their goodness and to praise their good deeds. The Samaritan of old was more merciful than the mitred priest whose just authority he denied. We find in this doctrine nothing to excite bitterness or unkindness towards good people of every name. But it causes an element of gentleness and pity to mingle with our love. We are sorry, not angry, that, in rejecting this great doctrine, they have deprived themselves of so

much comfort, and their faith of such sure safeguards.

We claim, then, that the doctrine of apostolic succession is a beautiful supplement to that great doctrine of justification by faith only. Appended to the latter, it is wholesome and very full of comfort. It humbles the sinner, it exalts the Saviour, it promotes holiness.

To all this it may be replied, that there is an insuperable difficulty in the way of receiving this doctrine. However beautiful may be the theory, the *fact* of this succession cannot be proven. So many links intervene between the days of the apostles and our own (it is said), and a large part of the Church's history is so imperfectly written, that we are unable to produce a perfect list of bishops, each one of whom was consecrated by his predecessor. *How do we know but that the succession may have been broken?*

We will ask the reader to pause for a moment, and leaving our immediate subject out of view, to estimate the exact value of this argument for disbelieving any commonly received truth. "How do I know but that it *may* have happened thus and so?"

I knew a lad who had been piously nurtured, and into whose mind a doubt concerning the truth of the Bible had never insinuated itself.

He fell into the company of certain smart skeptics, older than himself, who took a pleasure in disturbing his quiet faith. And so this thought came into his mind. He fought and prayed against it manfully. You may think him very silly, but it haunted him like an evil spirit for years. The thought was this:

This Bible is eighteen hundred years old;—it has been copied over and over again;—priests and monks had exclusive possession of it in the dark ages;—how do I know that it is the same book? May not omissions, changes, and additions have been made sufficient to alter its whole character?

The thought seemed to him to be a very wicked one; and he was ashamed to tell anybody of it. For several years it disturbed him whenever he opened the Bible.

He was relieved of it in this wise. He came to study Butler's Analogy, and found there this sentence:

“**THERE IS IN EVERY CASE A PROBABILITY, THAT ALL THINGS WILL CONTINUE AS WE EXPERIENCE THEM ARE, IN ALL RESPECTS, EXCEPT THOSE IN WHICH WE HAVE SOME REASON TO THINK THEY WILL BE ALTERED.”***

* Butler's Analogy, chap. i. § ii.

It was only after repeated reading that he took in the meaning of this sentence. This illustration was suggested to him:

You do not find it difficult to believe that the sun has risen each morning in the east, and set each evening in the west, with regularity and precision, filling its round in twenty-four hours. You have not a doubt of it, except on that one day when Joshua bade it stand still.

Suppose some one should say that in the four thousand years past, it *may* have been otherwise. You answer, the sun now rises in the east; a thousand writers say that in their days he did the same. It is superfluous to imagine, in the absence of all proof, that on some unknown occasion it may have been different. We all believe that the day has invariably been twenty-four hours long, except on the one occasion alluded to; and there we have a reason to believe the contrary—viz., the sacred record of an exception.

By and by he found in other books this principle applied to the integrity of the Holy Bible. Grant that liberties may have been taken with the sacred text. The infidel may imagine any thing he chooses. To his mere surmise we oppose the plain, simple fact, that learned persons, who have made this point their study, declare all such surmises to be groundless; they say that

there is no reason to think that our copies of the Bible vary essentially from those which the early Christians held in their hands.

Apply the same principle to common life. You have an acquaintance of many years standing, and other persons, known to you, have known him from childhood. These say he is a man of integrity; you have seen him conduct himself habitually and invariably as a scrupulously honorable man. Would it be right for you to distrust him, because, forsooth, in some instance, unknown to you, he *may* have played the rogue? We conclude, then, in any given, settled course of things, it is frivolous to object, "*this or that may have happened,*" unless there is probable reason to think that *this or that has happened*.

To return to the apostolic succession.

In the early history of the Church we read that the apostles ordained bishops as their successors and set them over various churches.

Eusebius gives us the lists of succession, in various cities, from the apostles down to the year 305.

In his day, and until the Reformation, the law and the custom of Christendom were uniform and invariable.

Open the Church history at random, in every age, in every country, you will find the same

custom prevailing, of one bishop conveying orders to another. There is no trace of any opposite practice: all the canons of the ancient councils imply that this was the received law and custom.

Is not this evidence of uninterrupted custom the most that a reasonable man can ask? Are we to suppose, without so much as a tradition to that effect, that men would, without rhyme or reason, innovate on the well-established order of things? Men do not act without motives; and a bad man would have no motive to deceive in this instance. If he desired the office of a bishop from selfish motives, his own self-interest would prompt him to avoid any flaw or error in the conveyance of that dignity.

Believe the fact of an uninterrupted succession of bishops. It is the great fact that pervades all Church history, and there is no reason at all to believe the contrary. When Christian people, forsaking the appeal to facts, begin to argue that this or that may have happened, they little think how a like objection may be urged with equal force against the whole Christian system and revelation.

In conclusion, then, dear reader, of nothing are we so incredulous as of the love of God to sinners. We, who profess to believe in the cross

of Christ, the utmost proof of it, do still stagger through unbelief, when we are reminded of some additional display of the Divine mercy.

You believe that God spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all. Can you not believe, also, that the gates of hell have not prevailed against the Church, and that to us, no less than to men of the olden time, Christ gives apostles, prophets, and teachers, whose office is divine, whose commission is from on high ?

In your day of trouble, read your Bible, pray to your Father in secret, call for sympathizing friends to weep with you. There is comfort in all these.

And then send for the MAN OF GOD, and bid him speak with authority. Ask him for a word from the Lord ; and you shall know for yourself that God's word is most full of comfort when spoken by God's own minister.



Tracts for Missionary Use.

No. 5.

OUR LORD IN SIMON'S HOUSE;

OR, WHAT THE CHURCH DEMANDS FOR ADMISSION TO THE
SACRAMENTS.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1859,

BY DANIEL DANA, JR.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern
District of New York.

OUR LORD IN SIMON'S HOUSE.

“This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner.”—LUKE vii. 39.

In order to realize the transaction that occurred in the house of Simon the Pharisee, we have need to bear in mind several peculiarities of Eastern life. Thus, men wore sandals instead of shoes; these were laid aside at the door of a house, and the guest was offered water to bathe his feet. Moreover, it was the custom to recline instead of sitting at table; so that the feet could be readily approached by a servant. And yet again, unguents and perfumes were in constant use, and at costly entertainments were poured upon the heads and beards of the company.

Our Lord had accepted the somewhat churlish hospitality of Simon the Pharisee. He entered, but did not receive the usual welcome of a kiss, or the common courtesy of water for his feet;

and thus took his place at the table an unhonored guest.

But presently a timid stranger joined the company. “Behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with ointment.”

No words were spoken. Sometimes the heart is so full that no words are adequate to express its emotions ; and its story can best be told by a silent tear, or a lowly gesture.

But could any one, think you, look without sympathy on this scene, and not feel pity for her who so mutely and humbly expressed her penitence and her faith ? Could any one look on, and find matter for cavil, censure, scorn ?

Yes : the Pharisee saw it all with feelings of contempt. This man a prophet ? If he were a prophet, he would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him ; for she is a sinner.

In his view, our Lord compromised Himself by accepting the homage of one whom He should rather spurn from Him. He was breaking down

those barriers between vice and virtue, which are necessary in every well-ordered society. He suffered this woman to touch Him, and she a *sinner*. True, she was a sinner: but one thing Simon overlooked; she was a *contrite* sinner. And that circumstance gave character to the whole transaction.

We ask you now, then, to note well this fact, that our Lord Jesus Christ, holy and truthful as He was, fell under the grave suspicion of being deficient in religious strictness; of being too accessible to sinful people; of giving encouragement to those whom He ought to frown upon and repel. The case before us is not a solitary instance; again and again did our Lord oppose certain prescriptive notions and customs, very dear to the men of His day, and give occasion for them to say, "this man keepeth not the law," "this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." Some even called Him "a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."

Now, bearing this well in our minds, it need excite no surprise, if, at subsequent periods of the world's history, those who hold our Lord's doctrine, and strive to patterñ after His example, become exposed to like suspicion; for in every age there are certain religious conventionalities

which are apt to be made the touchstone of vital godliness, and if we seem to regard these as of minor importance, we are in danger of being considered lukewarm, unevangelical, having the form of godliness with none of its power.

As members of the Protestant Episcopal Church, we must be aware that such imputations are cast upon us. The Church is suspected of making too little of heart-religion; of receiving members without the necessary qualifications; or, to state the matter in popular form, it is said, "Any one that chooses can join the Episcopal Church." "You receive people who have not professed; who are not converted; who are not satisfied; who are only trying to be Christians, and as yet are not Christians."

We hear these things once and again, from persons whom neither in charity nor in justice would we class with Simon the Pharisee; persons whose good opinion we value, whose censure we deprecate: perhaps they are kind enough to say that in the immediate locality of the discussion, the instructions of the pulpit are distinct and tolerably evangelical, and the individual congregation, at least, not entirely without evidences of earnest-minded piety. But they are very sure these grave faults belong to the system, although

under peculiar circumstances they may not be so apparent.

We have therefore deemed it expedient to set forth a plain account of the qualifications necessary for admission to the sacraments of the Church; and because we claim no exemption for ourselves, but are willing to sink or swim with the Church and her teachings, let us distinctly disavow any private views or opinions. You hold in your hands a volume where the mind of the Church is plainly set forth. For every thing that is in that Prayer-book the Church is responsible. You have it in your power to judge whether we misrepresent her teachings in any way; and more than this—whether the practice of ministers is conformed to those laws which they are most solemnly pledged to carry out.

With a little inquiry, each one of you will be fully competent to answer any questions which may be addressed you touching this matter; and we do not fear to affirm that a careful scrutiny will enhance your reverence for the Church, and satisfy you that she has patterned most strictly after the example and teachings of her Lord, rebuking as He rebuked, and encouraging such persons as He was wont to encourage.

In speaking of the qualifications for Church-membership, we must premise that we do not

include the case of those who come to the Communion by a certain courtesy. Thus, if among the communicants, one present himself who is a stranger, we take it for granted that every thing is right: otherwise we could exercise our religious rights only at home; whereas, as members of the Catholic Church, we carry those rights with us wherever we go. But if this stranger become a regular attendant at any church, the minister, in order to protect himself, has the right to use his discretion. According to Canon XIII., of 1853, he may demand of such person a certificate from the Rector or Warden of the parish he has left, that he is a communicant in good standing, and is not required to administer the Communion to one who fails to produce such a certificate.

It is very seldom necessary to enforce this rule, but it can be enforced. Should some one come to sojourn among us, claiming the privileges of the Church, and yet so conducting himself as to bring scandal upon it, the minister has the legal right to protect the Church from this evil.

We limit ourselves, then, to the case of those in our own congregations who desire admission to Baptism, Confirmation, or Communion.

1. *No man who is living in malice, envy, or any open sin, is permitted to come to the Sacraments.*

The language of the Church is plain and indisputable. In the Communion Service you will find an exhortation to be used by the minister, when he gives warning for the celebration of the Holy Communion. He is made to tell the people, "*If ye shall perceive your offences to be such as are not only against God but also against your neighbors, then ye shall reconcile yourselves unto them ; being ready to make restitution and satisfaction according to the uttermost of your powers, for all injuries and wrongs done by you to any other ; and being likewise ready to forgive others who have offended you, as ye would have forgiveness of your offences at God's hand : for, otherwise, the receiving of the Holy Communion doth nothing else but increase your condemnation.*"

And then follows a solemn warning :

"*Therefore, if any of you be a blasphemer of God, an hinderer or slanderer of His Word, an adulterer, or be in malice or envy, or in any other grievous crime, REPENT YE OF YOUR SINS, OR ELSE COME NOT TO THAT HOLY TABLE.*"

The Church teaches, in Art. XXIX., that all such persons, "*although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth (as Saint Augustine saith) the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ ; yet, in no wise, are they partakers of*

Christ, but rather, to their condemnation, do eat and drink the sign or sacrament of so great a thing."

Nor is the Church content with merely making proclamation. She holds her ministers responsible for the character of all who frequent the Sacrament. She gives them ample powers to vindicate her purity, and makes it their imperative duty so to do.

If you will turn to the very beginning of the Communion Office, you will find it there written as follows :

¶ *If among those who come to be partakers of the Holy Communion, the Minister shall know any to be an open and notorious evil liver, or to have done any wrong to his neighbors by word or deed, so that the Congregation be thereby offended ; he shall advertise him that he presume not to come to the Lord's Table, until he have openly declared himself to have truly repented and amended his former evil life, that the Congregation may thereby be satisfied ; and that he hath recompensed the parties to whom he hath done wrong ; or at least declare himself to be in full purpose so to do, as soon as he conveniently may.*

¶ *The same order shall the Minister use with those, betwixt whom he perceiveth malice and hatred to reign ; not suffering them to be partakers of the Lord's Table, until he know them to be reconciled. And if one of the parties so at variance, be content to forgive from the bottom of his heart all that the other hath trespassed against him, and to make amends for that wherein he himself hath offended ;*

and the other party will not be persuaded to a goodly unity, but remain still in his frowardness and malice ; the Minister in that case ought to admit the penitent person to the Holy Communion, and not him that is obstinate : Provided that every Minister so repelling any, as is herein specified, shall be obliged to give an account of the same to the Ordinary as soon as conveniently may be.

You observe that a right of appeal is here given to the Ordinary or Bishop, lest ministerial authority should be controlled in its exercise by any personal unkindness.

The law is plain : no malicious or envious person, no unclean liver, is permitted access to the Holy Table, without repentance, reparation, restitution, and amendment. And this law is not a dead letter, buried in some old statute-book, but is printed where every man can see it ; is openly and solemnly read from the chancel where all must hear it ; is committed absolutely to the minister to be enforced.

It may be that hypocrites kneel at the altar, and a Judas comes to the feast ; it may be that some commune, whose hearts are full of malice and whose lives are wicked and immoral. For a man may hide his wickedness from his pastor's knowledge, and so, industriously increase his condemnation while we think to promote his safety. It may be that individual ministers

have not the firmness to do their duty, or the boldness to claim and exercise their just rights, regardless of consequences. But let these bear the blame. The Church herself is guiltless: her voice gives no uncertain sound. She says distinctly, that no matter what a man's other qualifications may be, unless he reforms his life, reconciles himself to enemies, repairs injuries, and restores what he has unjustly gotten, he must not, he shall not, be received among her children.

2. *Persons are not admitted to the sacred ordinances of religion thoughtlessly and without a proper examination.*

It is not enough, according to the laws of the Church, that the applicant for admission to her privileges be simply reputable in his deportment. Let us follow out this matter in order.

We will suppose a man of adult years desires to be baptized. The first rubric in the Office of Adult Baptism prescribes what course is to be pursued.

¶ *When any such Persons as are of Riper Years are to be baptized, timely notice shall be given to the Minister; so that due care may be taken for their examination, whether they be sufficiently instructed in the principles of the Christian Religion; and that they may be exhorted to prepare themselves, with prayers and fasting, for the receiving of this Holy Sacrament.*

¶ *And if they shall be found fit, then the Godfathers and*

Godmothers (the People being assembled upon the Sunday, Holy Day, or Prayer Day appointed) shall be ready to present them at the Font, immediately after the Second Lesson, either at Morning or Evening Prayer, as the Minister, in his discretion, shall think fit.

¶ *And standing there, the Minister shall ask, Whether any of the Persons here presented be baptized or no? If they answer No; then shall the Minister say thus:*

So far from any encouragement being given to precipitation, you observe, timely notice is required: the danger of haste and thoughtlessness is guarded against, by requiring of the candidate to prepare himself with prayers and fasting; the minister is to examine him, and to proceed with the baptism only if he “be found fit.”

All baptized persons, whether they have received that benefit in infancy or in age, are expected to be confirmed by the Bishop. And here again we find a barrier: none can be confirmed except they be presented by their minister. He must pronounce them, to the best of his judgment, fit to be confirmed; and include their names in a list delivered to the Bishop. The law upon this matter may be found at the end of the Catechism.

The Minister of every Parish shall diligently upon Sundays and Holy Days, or on some other convenient occasions, openly in the Church, instruct or examine so many

Children of his Parish, sent unto him, as he shall think convenient, in some part of this Catechism.

¶ *And all Fathers, Mothers, Masters, and Mistresses shall cause their Children, Servants, and Apprentices, who have not learned their Catechism, to come to the Church at the time appointed, and obediently to hear, and to be ordered by the Minister, until such time as they have learned all that there is here appointed for them to lurn.*

¶ *So soon as Children are come to a competent age, and can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and can answer to the other questions of this short Catechism, they shall be brought to the Bishop.*

And whensoever the Bishop shall give knowledge for Children to be brought unto him for their Confirmation, the Minister of every Parish shall either bring, or send in writing, with his hand subscribed thereunto, the Names of all such Persons within his Parish, as he shall think fit to be presented to the Bishop to be confirmed.

And again, at the end of the Confirmation Service, we find it ordered thus:

¶ *And there shall none be admitted to the Holy Communion, until such time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed.*

These matters belong to what is called, in Theology, the “Power of the Keys.” Christ has committed to His ministers the keys of His earthly kingdom, with authority, in certain cases, to open or to close its doors. You observe, they are required to challenge every adult who asks

to be baptized, and assure themselves of his fitness. It is, furthermore, their duty to instruct, examine, and present all candidates for Confirmation; and, up to this point, they are held distinctly responsible for those whom they receive.

After this point, however, their rights are abridged, and are more advisory than peremptory.

All confirmed persons have a right to a place at their Lord's Table. They cannot be excluded from it arbitrarily, but only for some evident fault; and, if the minister finds it necessary to use such discipline, he must, within a reasonable time, report such act to his superior, and be prepared to vindicate his conduct.

We further observe:

3. *The Church enjoins the great Evangelic graces and tempers, as absolutely requisite for a worthy reception of the Sacraments.*

These are, first and chiefly, Repentance and Faith; and then, as included in these or proceeding necessarily from them, Gratitude, Charity, and Holy Purpose.

The form of words to be used, whenever one gives up himself to the service of Christ, is carefully prescribed, and may in no case be departed from. Every man may know beforehand what he is to undertake, and, afterwards, what he has

undertaken. What, then, is the nature of the profession made in Baptism?

Dost thou renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh ; so that thou wilt not follow, nor be led by them ?

Ans. *I renounce them all ; and, by God's help, will endeavor not to follow nor be led by them.*

Min. *Dost thou believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith, as contained in the Apostles' Creed ?*

Ans. *I do.*

Min. *Wilt thou be baptized in this Faith ?*

Ans. *That is my desire.*

Min. *Wilt thou then obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same, all the days of thy life ?*

Ans. *I will, by God's help.*

Here, you will observe, the baptized person renounces the world, the flesh, and the devil ; he professes his belief in the simple truths and leading doctrines of the Gospel ; he affirms that he is acting intelligently and of his own accord ; he declares his purpose to lead an obedient and Christian life ; and, at the same time, owning his weakness, and his dependence on spiritual help, shapes his vow into the form—"By God's help, I will endeavor.—I will, by God's help."

In Confirmation, we do but renew and ratify this baptismal vow ; declaring that, on mature reflection, we are of the same mind ; and stand

ready to reaffirm to the chief officer of the Church the promise which we had once made, or which was made for us.

And now we are ready to ask—

Quest. *What is required of those who come to the Lord's Supper?*

This is the last question in the Catechism. We trust almost every little child knows the answer.

Ans. *To examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life; have a lively faith in God's mercy, through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death; and be in charity with all men.*

We cannot conceive an answer clearer or more comprehensive than this. See how carefully the terms are chosen. They must repent—repent them *truly*; they must have faith—and a *lively* or living faith; they must have Christ's death in remembrance—and in *thankful* remembrance.

The same teaching pervades the whole of the Communion Office. The people are reminded beforehand that it is a “divine and comfortable thing to those who receive it worthily;” but “dangerous to those who presume to receive it unworthily.” The minister exhorts them to “consider the dignity of this Holy Mystery, and the great peril of the unworthy receiving thereof;

and so to search and examine their own consciences (and that not lightly, and after the manner of dissemblers with God, but so) that they may come holy and clean to such an heavenly feast."

Similar language is used at the administration of the Communion.

Dearly beloved in the Lord, ye who mind to come to the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ, must consider how St. Paul exhorteth all persons diligently to try and examine themselves, before they presume to eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup. For as the benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy Sacrament; so is the danger great, if we receive the same unworthily. Judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord; repent ye truly for your sins past; have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour; amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men: so shall ye be meet partakers of those holy Mysteries. And above all things, ye must give most humble and hearty thanks to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for the redemption of the world, by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, both God and man; who did humble himself, even to the death upon the cross, for us miserable sinners, who lay in darkness and the shadow of death; that he might make us the children of God, and exalt us to everlasting life.

And what a service it is! Into how lowly a depth of penitence, and, presently, into what holy strains of gratitude are we conducted! How impressive is it to see a congregation heark-

ening, on bended knee, to the “comfortable words” which Christ has spoken ; and then, singing the song of angels and archangels—but still upon our knees, lest we should seem to presume and to forget our nothingness. Surely, my friends, the Church is not responsible for our remissness : she tells us our duty too plainly for us to be mistaken about it ; she supplies words deep enough, and large enough, and warm enough for saints. Whom can we blame, save ourselves, if we come unprepared, abide unimpressed, and depart uninvigorated ?

4. *The Church teaches that it is very desirable to possess a calm, tranquil, and comfortable spirit.*

She teaches us that pardon and peace do not always go together. Experience and observation assure us, that through imperfect knowledge or constitutional infirmity, many most excellent persons are despondent at times, and strangers to religious joy. She says :

And because it is requisite that no man should come to the Holy Communion, but with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience ; therefore, if there be any of you, who by these means cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other Minister of God's word, and open his grief ; that he may receive such Godly counsel and advice, as may tend to the quieting of his conscience, and the removing of all scruple and doubtfulness.

Here, you observe, the desirableness of a calm and tranquil frame of mind is plainly asserted; the people are advised, as a means to gain quietness of conscience, to advise with their religious guides. But this is far from being made indispensable; people may be very down-hearted and diffident of themselves, but they are told, if they truly repent, and are in love and charity, and intend to lead a new life, they may draw near with faith and take this holy Sacrament to their comfort.

The requirements, then, which the Church makes of one who would approach her solemn feast, are few and plain. He must be free from vice, immorality, and malice; he must be instructed in the great doctrines of the Christian religion; he must be in the exercise of repentance, and entertain a grateful memory of what Christ has done for him; he must be earnestly purposed to do his whole duty as a Christian, and come forward in humble dependence upon the Holy Ghost the Comforter. To all such she utters comfortable words; and all such she receives as worthy partakers of this heavenly feast.

Did she exact less of us she would be a deceitful guide, saying peace, peace, when there is no peace; and did she exact more, she would

encroach upon that liberty which we have in Christ, and impose on us a burden greater than we can bear. If it seem better to sum up all in one comprehensive phrase, we say, that the one great essential thing is a contrite spirit. The Prayer-book, from one end to the other, teaches the religion of the broken and the contrite heart. This was the religion of the Magdalene; this was the religion of Peter, not in the hour of presumption when he boasted of his fidelity, but in that better hour, when grieved in spirit he cried, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."

We have seen thus far what is absolutely required by the Church of candidates for the benefit of the Sacraments which she dispenses. It becomes us next to mention a few things which she does not require.

1. You will observe, that in all the authorities which we have so freely quoted, nothing is said about the *history of conversion*: no particular type or pattern of experience is set up as being alone reliable and safe.

In order to discern this point, we will suppose that a man presents himself as desirous to become a member of the Church: we would form a judgment about his religious state. Now, we may, if we think proper, inquire into the history

of his religious life; ask how he was awakened, and when; whether he was most operated on by love or by fear; we may inquire into the nature of his inward conflict; we may ask what seasons of peace and comfort he has had, and when and where he surrendered his soul without reserve to Christ: and, comparing the account thus given with some standard on which we rely, we may pronounce such an one truly converted, and give him the right hand of fellowship.

But there is another way: while we listen with much interest to a narrative, and find in its circumstances much to throw light on the man's character, we may avoid laying much stress upon it, and say, What is the result of all this? what is now, *at this moment that we are speaking*, the temper of your soul towards God and His law?

You observe the difference. In admitting you to the Communion, the minister may either ask for a history of your religious experience, or he may form his judgment upon the sentiments and purposes which you avow at the time of application.

The Prayer-book recognizes the latter of these tests. The Church says, Tell me your present mind and purpose; and provided these meet her demands, she is comparatively indifferent as to

the manner in which this result was brought about. Let us see what reasons there are for using this test in preference to any other.

It is, then, the *simplest* that can be found. Men differ much in their spiritual history. There are some (and God grant that in another generation there may be many more!) who have been under the influence of religious principle from their earliest childhood, who remember not a day spent without prayer to God, and whose mature piety is a gradual development of the religion of childhood. Others, again, have spent many years in utter neglect of all religious duty. And of these, again, some may have been gradually impressed, and some quite suddenly. One man woke up in alarm, and discovered that he was on the brink of ruin; while upon another, better thoughts stole in so gradually, that he can scarce give any account of his awakening. And in their subsequent history, there are some who think to identify a day or an hour which seemed to be a crisis; while others can only say that the good seed has grown up, they trust,—but, indeed, they know not how.

But various as our several experiences may be, there is one thing in which they perfectly agree. I mean the result. Whether we began sooner or later; whether our history was event-

ful, or marked by steady progress,—one thing is very certain: if we are indeed Christians, we have come at last to an humble, trusting, loving temper. This we must have; it matters little how we came by it. And so the Church asks this simple question: Are you now penitent for sin, trusting in the divine mercy through Christ, determined to lead a godly life, forgiving as you hope to be forgiven? Surely, such tests as these have the merit of great simplicity. And they are the *safest* tests, too. There can be no greater error than to rest upon an experience that has grown old, something that was wrought in us years, or months, or even weeks ago. Our manna should be gathered every day; we must not keep it over until it corrupts in our hands. For, supposing that our religious experience comes fully up to the highest standard; that, alas! will do us no good if we have relapsed into self-confidence and impenitence. There is one safe test of our spiritual condition, and only one; it is that which the Church propounds, whether we are seeking in the present to follow, with all humility and thankfulness, the example of our master, Christ.

Another argument in favor of the standard set up in the Church is, that it throws upon each one of you a responsibility which you ought to bear.

We have said something already of the power of the keys; perhaps we seemed to speak somewhat boldly touching the authority and rights of the Priesthood. But there is one power which we earnestly disclaim, a power which the Church has nowhere conceded to us, and which none but God can exercise with safety to His people. I mean the power of discerning spirits, and of pronouncing judgment on men's sincerity.

We must propound to you the terms of salvation; we must exact of you a solemn profession of repentance, faith, and obedience; we may take cognizance of your deeds, and when a communicant openly violates the great principles of his duty, we have no choice but to warn him that he abstain from the Holy Table; we may advise and caution those whose sincerity we doubt; but this is as much power as can be intrusted to a mortal. We dare not sit in judgment on your hearts, or assume a place on that tribunal which is God's alone.

Suppose, then, you wish to commune: you come to the minister; he demands the history of your experience; compares it, say, with his own, or with some standard which he elects; and admits you or refuses you on such a showing. See you not, that this is lording it over God's heritage; arrogating the omniscience of the great

God himself; exercising an arrogant rule over the precious sheep of Christ, whom He purchased with His blood? The system of the Church obviates all this danger; it throws the responsibility of passing upon your sincerity, where it justly belongs,—upon you yourselves.

Whenever a man professes to be a penitent and a believer, our duty is plainly marked out: we must bid him be careful, and examine himself not lightly, nor as a dissembler with God; and, unless something appears in his conduct manifestly inconsistent with a Christian character, we are bound to receive him on that profession; we dare not dispute his integrity; and his guilt is on his own head, if his lips utter what his heart belies.

We deem, then, that in making a man's present state and temper the test of fitness, and in not requiring conformity to any particular type of experience, the Church has adopted a rule which is simple; which alone is safe; which imposes upon the candidate a responsibility that he cannot avoid; and which withdraws from the priest a power which even inspired men were not competent to exercise. Thus, Philip baptized Simon Magus, hypocrite as he was, on his own profession.

2. *The Church does not require of any indi-*

vidual the affirmation that, at some given moment, he has experienced a strange and mysterious manifestation of God's good-will and pardoning mercy.

For she finds such a doctrine nowhere in the Bible. That book is a revelation to us all, superseding the necessity of a revelation to us individually; it assures us that God pardons all those who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his Holy Gospel. And when we have, to the best of our ability, complied with these conditions, it is our duty to believe, and it is the duty of God's ministers to certify us that we are forgiven.

Furthermore, we are to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith: there can be no need of any self-examination, if each one of us is to be assured by God himself, through a direct and immediate communication, that He accepts our penitence.

The publican does not seem to have had any such manifestation; Paul was lying in darkness and in tears, when Ananias bade him rise and be baptized; the trembling jailer was baptized upon faith in a goodness preached to him by the apostles; in fine, God's word is yea and amen. He is not a man, that He should lie; or the son of man, that He should repent. He has said,

once for all, that He will forgive His penitent people; He has spread that promise on the pages of His word; He re-affirms it at every Sacrament; and no man has a right to demand any greater assurance than is thus afforded him. There is, indeed, a witness of the Spirit; an outward witness in the Word and Sacraments, which perpetuate the promises of pardon; and an inward witness too; for the humble penitent is conscious of a heavenly power which aids his repentance, and sustains him in his poor efforts, and draws his heart upward towards good and heavenly things. Our hunger and thirst for holiness, our shame in view of past sins, our longing to please God,—all these are the inward witness of the Spirit. But our own judgments are not set aside, and we must believe the love that God hath to us.

And when to all this we add the teachings of experience, remembering that many most holy people say they have had seasons of great comfort, even in trouble and sickness, but cannot point to any such moment of rapture and deliverance; when we think how many persons have claimed this testimony, while their subsequent history shows that it was all a delusion; we may well be content to fall back and rely upon the humbler testimony of our conscience that we are

trying to serve our God, and upon His oft-repeated promise not to despise those who sincerely seek Him.

Having thus seen what the Church does require, and what she does not require, we are now prepared to answer certain questions proposed in the beginning of this discourse ; and we repeat these in the very words in which they have very often been propounded :

1. "*Can any one that chooses become a member of the Church ?*"

Our first impulse is to answer, Yea—"The Spirit and the Bride say, Come ; and whosoever will, let him come." But, as we have seen, he must come in faith ; come with a penitent soul ; he must come away from pride and malice ; he must come professing an honest purpose to serve the Lord with all his heart. And, unless he comes thus, the ministers are expressly forbidden to minister to him the sacraments of redemption.

2. "*Do we receive people who have not professed ?*"

We answer, the Sacraments are the appointed ordinances wherein men confess Christ, and profess their purpose to take up their cross and follow Him. We receive converts, in order that they may make this profession.

But of any other profession the Church knows

nothing. She desires us to profess our sorrow, our gratitude, our faith, our new-born purposes ; but, as for any profession of a great change that has passed upon us, of holiness that we have acquired, of steadfastness that we have gained, all such professions she frowns upon and disallows. She desires not of the prodigal to declare how much better he is now than he was years ago, but would rather hear his contrite exclamation, "Father, I have sinned."

3. "*Does the Church receive those who are not satisfied?*"

We answer, Yes ; if their dissatisfaction is with themselves and with their spiritual attainments, so that they will cry mightily for help from God. Oh, she loves these people who are grieved and weary with the burden of their sins ; and who cry, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." But then, they must be satisfied that with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption ; they must be satisfied that they are poor, blind, helpless, and sinful ; satisfied to take Christ as their Saviour, and to rely upon the Holy Ghost to be their Comforter.

4. "*But does the Church require conversion?*" —for that is the sum of the matter."

Every thing here depends upon the meaning we give that word. And, in the Scripture sense

of it, we affirm that she makes it absolutely indispensable.

If conversion is a turning away from sin to holiness, from unbelief to faith ; if it is a change of heart, and mind, and life ; if it be evidenced by contrition, by reparation of injuries, by reconciling enmities, by habits of devotion, temperance, and charity ; then is its necessity the whole burden of the Church's teaching. She affirms it in every exhortation, she interweaves it in all her prayers. She calls out in a voice too clear for any to mistake, "Repent ye of your sins, or else come not to this Holy Table."

But if, in the view of any, conversion is a thing different from that repentance spoken of in the Gospel ; if it means a certain form and routine of experience, culminating at last in a supernatural revelation of pardon, then we frankly avow the Church teaches no such doctrine.

The last inquiry is—

5. *Does not the Church receive those who are but trying to be religious, and as yet are not religious?*"

Reader, did anybody ever yet try to be religious and fail ? Has Christ forgotten that promise, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out?"

The Church teaches that the best of us are

but trying to be religious ; for she makes us at each Communion promise to lead a new life.

Many a one says he is trying to be religious, who is doing no such thing ; for he neglects the means without which he cannot become religious : he yields without resistance to sins which effectually detain him in the kingdom of darkness.

But every one who sincerely strives to be religious is already such. "The desire for grace, is grace begun." We are religious from that very moment when we comprehend the way of life, yield up our stubborn wills, and make up our minds that we will do all that God tells us, as far as we can, by His grace assisting.

In this sense, then, the Church encourages all those who are trying to be religious : she takes them to her bosom, that she may help them in an object so dear to her heart. But mark you, none are trying to be religious, save those who are diligent, by cultivating habits of penitence and prayer ; who have determined to submit to any and every sacrifice which their Lord is pleased to ask.

We trust that what we have thus spoken may serve to fortify you in the conviction that the Church has not betrayed her solemn trust, nor lowered the stern requirements of the Gospel to

win the rebellious and the disaffected sinner into a show and pretence of religion.

We trust that when those who do not understand these matters make inquiry of you, you will have that familiarity with the Prayer-book which will enable you to answer all such questions fairly and fully. And inasmuch as we cannot explain matters to the many, let us live our best: let us try to prove by our sobriety, our gentleness, our zeal in the cause of God, our earnest efforts to grow in grace, that we have not been taught to depend on external rites, to the neglect of vital godliness and earnest-minded piety.

In conclusion, it is the glory of the Church to follow in all particulars the pattern of our Lord. We have seen how, in the days of his flesh, He received the humble-minded sinner; yet, let us once again rehearse a narrative so replete with instruction and comfort.

“One of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat. And behold a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him, weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them

with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now, when the Pharisee which had bidden Him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him ; for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors : the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most ? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman ? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet ; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss ; but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint ; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much ; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And He said unto

her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

Many centuries have passed away: the Lord Jesus Christ has ascended into heaven, and intrusted to others that Gospel which, for a time, He ministered in person. And the men thus commissioned to act for Him and in His stead, are such as should "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, for that they themselves also are compassed about with infirmity."

Think, then, of some such frail mortal intrusted with the ministry of reconciliation. He has just read in the Church the story of our Lord in Simon's house, and one comes to him; perhaps a woman of a troubled spirit. Her narrative is interrupted by many a tear, but its sum is this: she feels herself guilty and deserving to be punished; the burden of her sin is very heavy; she would fain cast herself upon the mercy of God in Christ, and with the Spirit's aid begin a new and better life. She feels in her inmost soul her unworthiness so much as to gather up the crumbs under her Master's table; and she asks, Is there any mercy for me? will you suffer me, sinner that

I am, to come to your feast, and in the presence of the many, to own my faults, and pay my poor homage to the Saviour who came to seek sinners?

Reader, in such a case, what should that minister of Christ reply? Shall he call for the history of her repentance, and coolly measure it by some arbitrary standard? Shall he ask her whether she is satisfied, while every word and gesture shows that she is utterly humbled at the inadequacy of all her feelings? Shall he require of her to experience and to profess some rapturous evidence of God's good-will and pardoning mercy?

Oh no! we dare not thus presume. Discerning these manifest tokens of a broken spirit, we would fain raise such an one from the dust; we would tell her that Christ refuses none who feel their nothingness, and their need of Him; we would minister to her that comfort which she so sorely needs; we would receive her to the Holy Table, and say to her in the name of Him who suffered the Magdalene to bedew His feet with tears, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

Our God is a merciful God. He will not hearken to the proud, the obstinate, the impenitent. But if any one of you feels that he is poor, blind, helpless, and laden with infirmity, so

that you have naught else to offer save a heart grieved and wearied with its sins; fear not to seek your Lord, and offer Him your homage. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise!

THE PRAYER.

Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that Thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all those who are penitent; create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve Thee with a quiet mind, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Tracts for Missionary Use.

No. 6.

THE MESSAGE TO PETER.

BY

THE RT. REV. N. H. COBBS, D.D.

BISHOP OF ALABAMA.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1859,
By DANIEL DANA, JR.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern
District of New York.

THE MESSAGE TO PETER.

“But go your way, tell his disciples AND PETER that he goeth before you into Galilee ; there shall ye see him as he said unto you.”—MARK xvi. 7.

AMONG the interesting events connected with the crucifixion and resurrection of our Blessed Saviour, there is recorded the visit of the pious women to the sepulchre very early on the morning of the third day.

When these women reached the sepulchre, they looked, and saw to their surprise, that the great stone at its mouth was rolled away. And when they entered into the sepulchre, they saw a young man, sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment, and they were affrighted. “And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted ; ye seek Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified ; he is risen ; he is not here : behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples AND PETER, that he goeth before you

into Galilee; there shall ye see him, as he said unto you."

In commenting on the text, we shall take for granted that the angel who appeared to the women spake by authority from his Master; and shall, therefore, consider the message he delivered as coming from the Lord Jesus Christ himself. This is plainly intimated in the latter clause of the verse—"there shall ye see him, as he said unto you."

Let us inquire first, *Why this special message was sent to Peter:* go, tell the disciples AND PETER.

Although the name of Peter is incidentally mentioned, yet, we doubt not, it was introduced for a substantial and merciful reason; and that a great deal was conveyed in the simple addition of that one word. Peter seems to have been singled out, not because he was a particular favorite with our Lord; for it appears from the Gospels that John was the beloved disciple: nor was it because of any honor or priority intended to be bestowed on him above the others; for, in that case, Peter would have been mentioned before the other disciples. It would rather seem that Peter's name was added as a kind of after-thought on the part of the angel acting in behalf of our Saviour,—a considerate and merciful after-

thought, suggested by his late shameful downfall. Although when our Saviour was apprehended, all the disciples had basely deserted Him, and cowardly fled; yet the conduct of Peter was ungrateful and wicked in an aggravated degree, and had deserved the strongest reprobation from his Lord and Master.

He had, however, been made truly sensible of the turpitude of his behavior, and was now, most truly, an humbled, and a penitent man. All crushed as he was, under a deep sense of mortification and guilt, he must doubtless have felt, not only afraid, but ashamed to meet again his Lord and Master. As he painfully dwelt on all the humiliating circumstances of his melancholy downfall, he must have said to himself again and again, How can my Lord and Master ever forgive me for my late shameful conduct! How can He ever again have any confidence in any promises and professions that I may hereafter make! No doubt Peter's feelings of conscious guilt and shame were sometimes so pungent and overwhelming as almost to drive him to desperation.

Now, we doubt not, it was because the Saviour knew such to be the state of Peter's mind, that when the message was delivered, "Go your way, tell the disciples that He goeth before you to

Galilee, there shall ye see Him ; " there was added, by special designation, the name of Peter : " Tell the disciples AND PETER ; " as much as to say, *Be sure not to forget PETER* : Be very particular to tell Peter to go along too. Tell him that his Lord and Master heartily forgives him ; that He yet loves him, and will be as glad to see him as any of the other disciples. Yes, our Lord knew that Peter was so much mortified and crushed by a sense of his guilt, that he would be ashamed to acknowledge himself a disciple, and that he needed to be encouraged, to be inspired with confidence. Perhaps, without some such merciful intimation on the part of the Saviour, Peter might have gone off in despair, and have become reckless, and hardened, and lost. And this was the more likely, as he seems to have been naturally of an ardent, impulsive, and sensitive temperament. And therefore it was, that our blessed Lord, with the most delicate tenderness, caused a special message to be sent to Peter. Yes, it may be, that the thoughtful addition of that one word, was the means of bringing Peter to the presence of his Lord, and of saving that noble and gifted man from utter despair and ruin.

Ah ! what mighty power is there in one word of kindness judiciously uttered ! As the wise

man justly observes, “A word spoken in due season, how good is it!” Oh! the misery that might be prevented, and the happiness that might be conferred, if there were a little more considerate kindness in the world! Great, indeed, is the power of kindness to melt and subdue the stubborn heart! It is, indeed, the mighty weapon by which God is conquering a rebel world, and bringing back proud and stubborn sinners to submission and obedience.

But we remark, in the second place, *what an affecting instance was this of delicate and considerate tenderness on the part of our Saviour; and what encouragement is herein afforded to every humble penitent to hope in His mercy, and to certify his faith through the sacraments of the Church.*

How different the conduct of our Saviour from the spirit of the world! The men of this world would have cherished the feelings of revenge and contempt for the ungrateful conduct of Peter; would have bitterly reproached him for his baseness; would have scornfully repulsed him; and would have forbidden him ever again to show himself in the presence of his benefactor. But, not so with the compassionate Saviour. Overlooking his own wrongs and injuries, He generously thought only of Peter’s good.

Though grieved, deeply grieved, it was not because of the offence offered to himself, but because of the infirmity and sinfulness of Peter. He pitied the poor, frail, unhappy man. He saw, with sadness, the dark and deep abyss of shame and condemnation in which he was plunged; His bowels of compassion yearned over the fallen man; and He therefore pursued him with messages of kindness, and with all the winning appliances of love and tenderness. He did not wait for Peter to come forward, and make confession, as a condition of his being forgiven (this, indeed, would have been a great kindness); but He gratuitously sent after him, and gave him antecedent assurances of His pardoning mercy: and in this way He graciously won him back to rectitude, to usefulness, and to happiness.

Ah! how considerate and condescending was this conduct of our Saviour! What a delicate regard did He thus manifest for the sensibility, the wounded pride, and lacerated feelings of a fallen man! How interesting and lovely does the character of the Saviour thus appear! How infinitely exalted above the narrow, selfish, unforgiving, malicious, and vindictive spirit of the world! Who, in contemplating this transcendent and heavenlike conduct of the Saviour, as

exhibited through His messenger, the angel, would not exclaim with the Centurion who witnessed the crucifixion, “Truly this was the Son of God !” Most justly might it be inferred, that such spontaneous and exuberant goodness could have emanated only from the abode of heaven, from the bosom of the God and Father of Mercies.

And here, what abundant encouragement is afforded to every humble penitent to go in faith to the Saviour of the world, and to certify this faith in the sacraments of the Church.

When the poor sinner, being awakened by the Spirit of God, is crushed under a sense of his guilt; when he is anxiously asking what he must do to be saved, and is earnestly desirous to be reconciled to his God; when, all timid and alarmed, he fears that there can be no hope of mercy for such as he feels himself to be: let him contemplate the kind and condescending manner of the Saviour towards the offending, but penitent, Peter, and thus take to himself encouragement and comfort. Let him learn something of the mercy and goodness of the Divine Saviour; how ready He is to hear; how tender to pity and forgive; how prompt to receive and restore an humble, penitent sinner. Let this penitent bear in mind that the Saviour is “touched with

the feeling of our infirmities ;” that “ He knows our frame and remembers that we are but dust ;” that He ever stands with outstretched arms towards a world of sinners, with the solemn proclamation : “ Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” Let the penitent be emboldened by the restoration of Peter, to return to the Lord in faith ; to take hold of His promises of mercy ; and, in the sacraments of the Church, to devote himself to His service, and to seek the supplies of His grace, through those divinely appointed channels. Let it be well remembered, that all those deep convictions of sin ; all this hungering and thirsting after righteousness ; all this struggling against inward corruptions, are the messages which the Saviour sends through His Spirit of Grace to call the penitent back to Himself, and to restore him to the paths of peace and salvation. He may be well assured that the Saviour having made advances, and having sought him out when he was a careless, proud, and haughty rebel, will not now refuse him when, humble and suppliant, he asks for mercy on the faith of promises and pledges made in the Gospel.

Again, what an instructive example is here furnished for our imitation. One of the great duties, earnestly enjoined by our Saviour, and

powerfully enforced by His example, is that of forgiveness of injuries. It is indeed made one of the express conditions of our salvation. In the Gospel many earnest warnings are given against a malicious and unforgiving spirit,—a spirit which is destructive of the graces of Religion, and the fruitful source of misery and suffering in the world. But, ‘alas! how little of this forgiving spirit is exhibited, even among those who call themselves the followers of the meek and the lowly Jesus, and who often repeat the words of His prayer: “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” With what exacting tenacity do people cling to their own rights; and with what stubborn perseverance do they hold out in hatred and revenge! How eagerly do they catch at any plausible arguments to soothe the pride of self, and to justify hatred and malice, under the name of principle and conscience! And even when people do extend forgiveness, it is oftentimes reluctantly extorted, and with a bad grace; in an unkind and unfeeling manner; in a spirit of chiding and reproach; dwelling upon the errors and faults of the offender; harrowing up his feelings of shame and remorse, and thus, by a rude and rough hand, deepening the wound it professes to heal. How often are these acts of pardoning mercy so

performed as to leave behind a sting of bitterness, instead of an abiding sense of obligation and gratitude! Ah! how little is thought of the wounded pride, and mortified feelings, and penitential sorrows, and inward conflicts of soul, experienced by those who make confession, and ask for forgiveness at our hands! How often has the work of repentance and reformation been marred and defeated by the harshness of those who should have fostered and furthered it by kindness, and gentleness, and soothing appliances! How many persons of a sensitive, morbid temperament have been hardened in sin, and driven to desperation, for the want of a little soothing and condescending sympathy! How many are there, now crushed and fallen into sin, who need only the look of kindness and the voice of love, or some little expression of sympathy, to win them back to the paths of virtue! Ah! how seldom do we remember that a self-condemned and contrite spirit is tender, is sensitive, is fastidious, is suspicious; that such a spirit needs gentleness and sympathy; that, being timid, it requires to be encouraged, and inspired with confidence and self-respect, and not to be repelled by taunts and invectives! As the poet expresses the thought, in speaking of a broken and crushed rose:

“ This elegant rose, had I shaken it less,
Might have bloom’d with its owner a while ;
And the tear that is wiped with a little address,
May be follow’d, perhaps, by a smile.”

Ah ! what a want there is in the world _ of spiritual sympathy ; of bearing one another’s burdens ; of compassion for the faults and infirmities, for the wounds and diseases of the soul ! We are prompt enough to feel for the sufferings and to administer to the relief of the body ; but who thinks or cares to bind up the wounds of a broken and contrite heart, and to pour the oil of consolation into an humble and penitential bosom ! How seldom are those to be found who would send a kind and inviting message to an offending, though penitent Peter !

Ah ! if we would be Christians, in deed and in truth ; if we would cherish the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, and would bring forth the fruits of His Gospel ; if we would enjoy in our souls the peace of God that passeth all understanding ; and be qualifying ourselves for the blessed mansions of Heaven, let us be careful to put away from us all the feelings of bitterness and malice, of hatred and revenge. Let us cultivate the spirit of forbearance, of charity, of love ; let us remember our own failings, and learn to look with pity and indulgence on the infirmities of

others; let the law of kindness be ever in our hearts, and its accents familiar to our lips; and let us be tender of the name, and the rights, and the feelings of those around us. Let us not be too hasty in judging, nor rashly conclude that, because something is wrong, every thing must be bad. Let us not only forgive those who may offend and injure us, but let us forgive heartily and fully, without reservation, without reproach, without dwelling on the wrongs and injuries we have received, without tearing the wound we would endeavor to heal, without crushing the spirit we would desire to raise and restore. Such is the conduct that will commend itself to the judgment and conscience in the solemn hour of death; such is the conduct that will meet the approbation of God, the final Judge of all the earth.

PRAYER.

O Lord, who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth, send Thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace, and of all virtues, without which, whosoever liveth, is counted dead before Thee. Grant this for Thine Only Son, Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Tracts for Missionary Use.
No. 7.

HOW THE CHURCH WAS BUILDED.

BY A LADY.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1859,

By DANIEL DANA, JR.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern
District of New York.

“HOW THE CHURCH WAS BUILDED.”

PERHAPS there are few persons who, when they hear of a church being built, realize the difficulties which must be encountered,—difficulties enough to make the stoutest heart sink, and the truest courage fail, were it not for *His* help who shall one day “suddenly come to His Temple.”

Let me tell you something of the building of our church at H——, and what was done for this object by a Christian man. But you must go back with me twenty years. It is a beautiful country which surrounds us;—tall old trees, under whose shade the wild-flowers spring up, teaching sweet lessons of the Resurrection, and whose branches preach every year a sermon from the text, “we all do fade as a leaf.” Then the hills, sloping down to the water’s edge, so bright in summer; and the creek itself, flowing with a gentle and soothing murmur over the

stones ; seem all to unite in "blessing the Lord, praising and magnifying Him forever."

But, in the midst of all this beauty, there is something wanting ! The busy wheels of numerous factories are in constant motion ; the humble dwellings of the poor, and the mansions of luxury and wealth, meet the eye on every side ; but—*there is no church to be seen.* All the holy teaching of the trees, and flowers, and hills passes unnoticed, and every day is so quiet, that when Sunday comes, it can scarcely be more peaceful. "Man goeth forth to his work, and to his labor, until the evening," all the week long, and *then*, on the Lord's day, forgets, by offering praise and thanksgiving, to honor Him, who, "very early in the morning" on the "first day of the week," rose from Joseph's garden-grave.

A young physician has been going in and out among those working people,—visiting them in their homes, and winning their affections by the dying bed of some dear friend or relation. He had been accustomed all his life to the Church's holy services, and now he missed their strengthening influence, and his heart pitied the poor who had no Gospel preached to them.

So, he began the work zealously, and with a good courage ; and under his influence, in course

of time, a parish was organized, and services began to be held, once every Sunday, in the “old school-house.” But this did not satisfy him;—like David, he would “build a habitation for the Lord.”

You, who can go every Sunday of your lives to a church, which was built years ago, and without giving you any trouble, can hardly understand all his trials and discouragements. A doctor’s life in the country is no easy one, I assure you;—liable as he is to be summoned at any hour of the day or night, in storm or cold, to ride, perhaps miles, to visit some sick person. Yet, with all his incessant occupation, and a constitution enfeebled by disease and hard work, he found time to consider the welfare of the Church he so dearly loved. And when deprived of the services of the sanctuary, by being called (as he frequently was) to labor on the Lord’s day, in the duties of his profession, he laid aside the proceeds of his work to be devoted to the service of his Master.

Some of the servants of God have labored faithfully without seeing the fruit of their labors; one has sown, and another reaped; and, before the first stone of the Church he had hoped to see erected could be laid, he was removed to that “city which hath foundations, whose builder and

maker is God," and where "the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it."

Suddenly the Master called him ; but he was found watching, and so he was calmly laid to rest, while the comforting service of the Church was read, and the mourning crowd felt that "blessed" indeed "are the dead who die in the Lord."

Let us learn a lesson from this good man's life. Have not many of us said, "I have no time for these things ; the evening is the only season I can call my own ; I cannot *then* be expected to work for the Church ?" But let us take heed, and remember that there is a "night" coming, "wherein no man *can* work."

Ah ! that was a sad period in our church's history ; dark and mysterious at the time, but full of deep meaning ; for we were afterwards permitted to read (as in a book) the workings of that Mighty Providence by which "our church was builded." In the midst of the deep affliction which overshadowed us—and lay heavy upon all—the goodness and mercy of our God shone forth, and the instrument of His forming was brought out, ready for the conflict ; and *one*, who before had "cared for none of these things," was the man destined to bring his powerful will

and wonderful energies to work in behalf of his hitherto neglected Saviour.

So mighty is God in power, and “excellent in working!” The Hand which with a sudden blow took from us “the beloved physician,” caused by the same stroke the “living water” to flow from the heart of the awakened servant, who was henceforth to live only to His glory. The lowly school-house is now witness to the first adult baptism in the parish, and beholds the high-spirited man, whose strong mind and energies had heretofore been devoted to the extension of a large and responsible business, kneeling like “a little child,” with the water of baptism on his brow, at its simple chancel-rail. This was but the beginning; but the morning had now dawned, which was to “shine more and more unto the perfect day.” Afterwards, in Confirmation, and the Holy Communion, he sought new supplies of strength for many struggles with our great adversary, in which, by God’s grace, he was to come off more than conqueror. Like the apostle Paul, the first evidence he gave of his conversion was a practical indication. He did not ask, “Lord, are there few that be saved?” but, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me *to do?*” and he entered on his new course with a perfect renunciation of his own will. In a few months

he is called to part with the darling of his little flock—his youngest son. But, mark the change; no “strong crying and tears” are *now* wrung from his loving and tender heart, but he says, “It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good;” and he brings the beloved form to the same hallowed spot, and submissively lays it down, amid the holy prayers of the Church of his affections. And, as he writes upon his tomb, in the words of the Shunamite of old, “*It is well,*” he feels that all things *must* “work together for good, to those who love God;” for he knew in whom he had trusted, and turned from the world to unbosom his sorrow, having learned from whose hand relief would come. And now let us see how this “model layman” shaped his course after he had renounced the world and become henceforth a new creature.

He did not sit idly down, and think he had accomplished a great deal, by making a surrender of himself to his God, but he girded on the armor, and set forth in earnest for the great strife. Day by day the work went on, and he spent each leisure moment in talking to his neighbors, and urging their co-operation in his vast undertakings. In their houses, in the workshop, by the wayside, and during his many rides on business, *religion* was his all-engrossing theme,

and he never considered any thing too trifling or unimportant which might be the means of influencing some one for good. All those in his employment came to him with their trials and difficulties, ever sure of his ready sympathy and wise counsel. Thoroughly convinced, himself, of the Scriptural foundation of the Church he loved, he was always prepared to “give an answer to every man, of the hope which was in him.” He delighted to engage in conversation with those he met in his numerous walks; and if he found them living “without God in the world,” he would try to win them to the service of their Maker. Many now living have testified to his earnestness in first awakening in their minds the convictions which have resulted in bringing them within the fold of the Church.

But all this time, while the “spiritual house” was building under his influence and example, he did not forget the visible one. In his intercourse with the poorer members of the parish, he represented to them the advantage of having a house of prayer, erected to God’s glory, and gained their hearty interest in the work. Then, too, among his friends and acquaintances, he went with the same persuasive words upon his lips, and never shrank from the task of asking their pecuniary assistance, although he often met with

repulses sufficient to dishearten a less ardent spirit. Many thought him "beside himself," and, unable to understand his whole-hearted liberality, called his ideas "extravagant;" yet he was never discouraged, for he remembered that God had given him all things, and therefore he would not offer Him that which cost him nothing. He knew

"The work was not of earth,
But had its end in Heaven."

He was not one who would dwell in a "ceiled house," enjoying the comforts of a happy and luxurious home, while the Lord's house could find no place amid the beauties of the surrounding landscape.

Time would fail me to tell of all the obstacles and prejudices which this bold and remarkable man was obliged to overcome, ere the place was secured whereon the ark of the Lord was to find a resting-place. It was a bright summer afternoon when he stood with his children to see the ground broken for the new church edifice; and, at his request, each one removed a portion of the earth, which was to open wide its bosom, and enfold the substantial walls and heavy buttresses of —— Church.

The spot seemed already consecrated to our

blessed Lord and Saviour, for *this* was the place wherein prayer was to be made to Him continually, though sinners might blaspheme His name without.

All through the autumn, and a portion of the winter, the church building went on bravely, and when at last (by reason of the extreme cold) the busy sound of the mason's hammer was no longer heard, we could look from our chamber-windows, and trace its graceful outline against the red evening sky. Spring and summer came again, and the work was pursued diligently for another year, and the little community awaited with eager interest the day when the sacred portals should be opened for the first service in the new sanctuary.

It came at last, with a cloudless sky, and the forest trees (in the midst of which the church stands) were arrayed in tender and budding green. All nature seemed in unison with our thankful and happy hearts, as crowds of people began to assemble, at an early hour, to join in the sacred services of the day.

Many thoughts of the future filled the minds of that Christian band of worshippers, as they joined in the strains of praise and prayer which now arose for the first time from those walls,

whose arches shall echo, with holy ascriptions,
and whence

"Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ!"

shall ascend to His heavenly throne, until He comes to claim His earthly kingdom.

Some thought of the little children who would be brought to Jesus in holy baptism, and of those who in that place would take upon themselves the vows which had been made in their name ; and others thought how unnumbered souls would commemorate their Saviour's love at His holy table, and, after glorifying Him upon earth, would sing praises in Heaven "unto Him who loved them and washed them from their sins in His own blood." All, doubtless, thought that it was indeed no small thing to have placed one stone in that fair temple, for it was in truth no unpretending building, such as might have been erected with slight exertion ; its massive walls showed that it was intended for ages to come. The beautiful proportions of the high arched roof and "recess chancel" excited universal admiration, and some who had never been in such a church before, said, that when the organ pealed forth its deep tones in the opening anthem, it seemed like "the music of Heaven."

Was not this a day of holy triumph for that

earnest Christian, when he witnessed the fruits of his untiring exertions for the cause of his Maker? “ It was indeed a day of rejoicing to all; a day of happy and thankful memories, on which we love to dwell, now that he who guided us through all our difficulties in erecting the earthly tabernacle has been promoted to a higher station in the “ Church Triumphant.”

It was remarked to him at that time, by one who knew the struggles and trials through which he had passed, that “ *now*, he would be *quite at a loss*, as his work was completed;” to which he replied, “ Oh, no, my work has only begun; for twenty-one years of my life I have served the world; I have robbed my God of what was all His due, and while I live I can never repay the debt.” What his hand found to do, he did it with his might, and in nowise discouraged by the sacrifices and trouble which the building of *one* church had cost him, the very day before it was opened for Divine service he had secured the ground in a neighboring village for the planting of another. His heart was filled with high hopes for the future glory and honor of his Lord, in this new field, where “ the harvest” truly “ was plenteous,” but “ the laborers few,” for no place of worship had as yet been established, although the community was large and intelligent. The

church he planned was on a scale of liberality exceeding his previous efforts; a school-house was at once erected, where the people were gathered; the young parish was thriving, and the church partially built, when the decree went forth for the servant to “give an account of his stewardship.” But reaching onwards, even the last hour of his life he is anxious for the prosperity of the church, and leaves provision and solemn injunctions for others to finish his work.

After the removal of its beloved and lamented founder, none can know the absorbing hold it took on the thoughts and interests of his bereaved friends. Its progress, its difficulties—all connected with it, seemed a part of our daily life, associated with pleasant and sacred memories; his strong expressions of faith, his earnest demonstration of works, thus cementing in his own life and practice what God has joined together. And when the church was finished, and we assembled within its holy precincts to consecrate the noble structure to the honor of His great name, although many sorrowful pangs were mingled with our thanksgivings, as we remembered the one who had “taken sweet counsel” with us on earth, yet we checked our repining when we thought of him among the shining company who “walk about Zion,” within the walls of that city

of which “the Lamb is the light,” and which is peopled with the glorified spirits of those who, having “fought the good fight of faith,” are henceforth “resting from their labors.” So, with his life, his work is at an end, and he no longer needs the refreshment of God’s ordinances, and the services of the sanctuary, for he has reached his Father’s house, and his day of toil is over. With him life and work were synonymous, and in deplored the sudden visitation, many marvelled at the mysterious Providence that took him from so great a work ere it was finished. But, would it ever have been otherwise? Would he ever have ceased from his labors, until his Heavenly Father saw fit to translate him into that rest “which remaineth for the people of God?” The work on which he had just entered called for greater faith, greater hope, greater charity; greater sacrifices of time, of convenience, of means. Whenever his summons had sounded it would have found him doing his Master’s business. He lived “unto the Lord,” and when He took him, he “died unto the Lord,” so that, “living and dying he was the Lord’s.” While it is sufficient for us to know that “He doeth all things well,” faith leads us to that higher spiritual life, where, with the assembly of the blest, he awaits the final con-

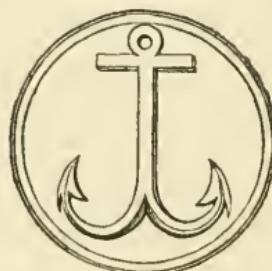
summation of glory. If the highest employment of heaven is doing God's will, and our blessed Saviour teaches us to pray (as our highest aim) that His "will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven," can we imagine a lower aim for those on whom earth has now no claim, and who have not yet entered heaven? No, we feel that when the blessed Lord took him from the great work on which he was engaged here, He "had need of him," for a higher and holier work in the kingdom of the saints. Our holy Church teaches us to give thanks to Almighty God for the good examples of those His servants "who have departed this life in His faith and fear," and we bear Him in our hearts, when we offer up our prayers in the sacred places, which are fragrant with his memory; for, "the righteous shall be had in *everlasting remembrance*."

And now I have told you how, through many obstacles and discouragements, "our church was builded," and have given you an account of what one man did. Can any one, then, say, "I have no influence with others? I have no gold to offer unto the Lord? I cannot do as *he* did?" But have you no offering of a "free heart" to give Him? no time to devote to serving Him? Remember, "ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price." The one of whom I have

been telling you did not content himself with giving his money to help build the church, but he gave, also, his time, his talents, his loving advice to others ; and although the career of usefulness in which he was earnestly engaged, was suddenly brought to a close, he still speaks to us, in his works and in his example. The churches he built, with their spires pointing heavenward, tell how much may be achieved by a ready and willing spirit, and suggest to us sweet and consoling thoughts ; for we know that “his labor was not in vain in the Lord.” Crowds of worshippers assemble within their walls to hear the Gospel read and preached, and generations yet to come, “shall rise up and call him blessed.”

The active and energetic layman can do much to strengthen the hands and cheer the heart of his pastor ; and in his intercourse with the world, in the ordinary routine of his business, has many more opportunities for the exercise of a true missionary spirit. It was often a matter of surprise that one who was never “slothful in business,” should yet be so “fervent in spirit ;” and strangers, to whom he would address himself, in regard to their spiritual concerns, have sometimes remarked, “Sir, you must be a *minister*, or you would not be so interested in my salvation.” The Church mourns the loss of such faithful

children, and her ministers deplore the want of sympathy and co-operation they need from her members, but we believe, for our comfort in the "day of our visitation," that our Heavenly Father withdraws His obedient servants from the scenes of their earthly labors, that those who remain may be quickened by their example, and animated by a hearty desire to follow in their footsteps. Let this thought stimulate us to greater earnestness in our holy cause, greater zeal, greater love, that in the exercise of our best energies here, we may be fitting for more exalted and holy employment hereafter.



Tracts for Missionary Use.
No. 8.

DEATH-BED REPENTANCE AND THE
PARISH REGISTER.

A NARRATIVE.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1859,

BY DANIEL DANA, JR.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern
District of New York.

DEATH-BED REPENTANCE AND THE PARISH REGISTER.

“I SHOULD be sorry to die just as I am now.”

So said Mr. Austen, an ingenuous but somewhat thoughtless young man, with whom Mr. Worthy had entered into conversation as they met in a morning walk.

“I have never taken hold of religion as I would wish to do. But I read my Bible and go to church. This morning I read the story of the Dying Thief.”

Mr. W. “And what did you make of it?”

Mr. A. “It is very full of comfort; do you not think so?”

Mr. W. “It is for some people, but I know of none for you.”

Mr. A. “Does it not seem to teach that,

‘While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return?’”

Mr. W. “By no means. It teaches that the

man who truly repents him of his sins, and steadfastly trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be saved ; and this, even when his sins have been many, and his life is near its close. But there is nothing in it to persuade one that the man who purposely postpones his religious duties until the last, will have either the opportunity or the grace of repentance. I think I can show you a vast difference between this case and yours. For instance, what religious advantages had the thief enjoyed?"

Mr. A. "None that we know of: probably, in those evil days, he had not much to help him in the way of precept or example."

Mr. W. "This is a strong point against you, who are nurtured in a Christian land, and by a Christian mother. But consider again, that, so far as we know, he accepted the first offer of the Gospel that was made to him, whereas you have refused a great many offers."

Mr. A. "There is reason in what you say; but, per contra, Mr. Worthy, I hope I am a better man than he, and have less need of pardon."

Mr. W. "It pains me to hear you urge that plea. I shall not answer it, for I judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come. We brand, and smite, and hang the poor wretch who breaks

the commandments of the second table: exceedingly indignant we are at sins committed against our lives, our families, our property, and our honor. It will be for God to decide whether these offences are more heinous than the deliberate violation by enlightened men of the commandments which come first—which assert the claims of Almighty God. But all this apart, there are ten thousand chances to one against your opportunities of repentance being equal to those of the thief.” And Mr. Worthy proceeded at greater length than we can use, to specify some of these uncertainties, counting them off on his fingers.

“ *First*, The thief was distinctly admonished of approaching death; he marched right up to it step by step. It is uncertain whether you will have such warning.

“ *Secondly*, The thief was in full vigor of mind and body. His brain was clear; he could see, hear, and talk. It is uncertain that your last hours will be undisturbed by debility, drowsiness, or delirium.

“ *Thirdly*, The thief had near at hand the gentlest and wisest of teachers—even the Master himself. It is uncertain that you will have any teacher at all, much more a judicious and faithful one. Often we ministers are troublesome; but

sometimes when men desire our help, we are not to be found.

“*Fourthly*, The thief had not lost his capacity of repentance. It is uncertain how long you may have this capacity. A man may go on from one thing to another—you may thus go on, until, when you come to die, there will not be enough of *man* left in you to make a Christian out of.

“But *fifthly*, what story did you say you read this morning?”

Mr. A. “The story of the Dying Thief.”

Mr. W. “You say wrong. There is no such story. ‘He was crucified between *two* thieves.’ One repented; not so the other. And supposing you have none of the disadvantages I have alluded to; that you stand upon an equal footing with these thieves; this story gives you the same reason to expect that you will be lost that it does to hope you will be saved. You have mistaken the bearing of this narrative. It is infinitely full of comfort to a contrite sinner, like to the thief, in his sin and in his sorrow for it; the man who has the sin, but not the sorrow, must look upon the other side of the cross; that thief is for his study, not this one.”

Mr. Austen was not unwilling to confess that he had judged and spoken hastily: there were

elements in this story which had escaped his attention. As they walked on, he proceeded to speak of the uncertainties of life.

“I ought to know,—indeed I do know, when I am serious,—that it is very unreasonable to count with certainty upon the future. Apart from Scripture, our ‘own poets’ have ransacked nature for images expressive enough to describe the brevity, the illusiveness, the uncertainty of life. I, if any one, should pray to be delivered from sudden death.”

Mr. W. “ You have observed that I make very frequent mention of it in preaching. But after all, after all our talk, our pretty images, our smart sayings, our sentimental reveries, how little we realize the uncertainty of life ! Mr. Austen, let me submit a few facts to you. As we have reached my study, come in and let us prolong our conversation.”

Upon Mr. Worthy’s table lay a large volume, with several loose memoranda lying upon the open page.

“ This is the parish register. I have been looking over the record of funerals. Here is a list of all, or nearly all, who have been buried with the Church service in the last few years, and most of them were known to you. Would you like to examine this list, and see what it says ?

We shall thus see how the case stands in our day and in our climate."

Mr. A. "With great pleasure. Your list is a long one for so small a congregation,—twelve last year; who would have thought it? But most of these names indicate children."

Mr. W. "Yes; I often think of Longfellow's lines—

'There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,
But hath one vacant chair:
There is no flock, however watch'd and tended,
But one dead lamb is there.'

God seems to call the little children to Him, that the hearts of the parents may follow thither. But leaving out children and servants, we have here the names of twenty persons; classifying them according to age, my account stands thus:

Old (over 50)	'8
Middle-aged	5
Young (from 16 to 25)	7 "

Mr. A. "So large a proportion of young people! Yes, I knew them all. Youth seems to be a poor protection."

Mr. W. "And even when we add other things. See, as my finger travels down the record; an only daughter, rich, beautiful—how strange it seemed to her that she must die! A young man of twenty-five; his parents left childless!

Another young man, not quite twenty-one, the stay of a widowed mother! Another, of about the same age! Here follow the names of two young girls who had just left school!

“Death is very inexorable. Oh, what bitter grief I have witnessed at the death of those young people, whose earthly prospects seemed so fair. We are dealing with facts now, not fancies; please note this well.

“Of adults, over sixteen years of age, who have died in this parish, one third were under twenty-five or thirty years.”

Mr. A. “It is even as you say. The old people on your list scarce exceed the young men and maidens.”

Mr. W. “Now let us make another arrangement. How much warning did they have?

Death preceded by lingering sickness.....	8
By sickness of a week or two	4
Sudden deaths	8

In other words, two fifths had no warning of approaching death, and another fifth the warning of but a few days.”

Mr. A. “But, sir, some of these eight were sick a while.”

Mr. W. “That is true; look over their names. With five of them death was instantaneous; they had not time so much as to utter a cry for

help. One died by casualty; another in her sleep; another in the street, of a sudden hemorrhage from the lungs; two others, who seemed to be in their usual health, were found dead or just dying. But there are three more in the list. I have added them, because consciousness forsook them when they were free from all apprehension, and never returned. Although they breathed some days, they had no more warning of their end than the other five."

Mr. A. "Yes, I remember. One fell down in a fit, suddenly. Poor fellow, he knew nothing afterwards, although he lived a week. That old man was knocked down by a horse, and never spoke again. And the last—what were the facts in her case?"

Mr. W. "In the midst of what seemed to be a trifling illness, all at once she was seized with congestion of the lungs and brain, and died in a few hours. Note then this second fact.

"In this parish two fifths of the people have died without any knowledge that death was near at hand."

"But let us take another look. I said that we must not count on having religious facilities about us when we come to die. Just observe this third fact.

"One fourth of these people died away from home."

"Here are the names of three who died at an inn or boarding-house, and of two who died on the highway."

Mr. A. "These are interesting details. Can you, in addition, form any estimate of the proportion who were ready to meet God?"

Mr. W. "It is not for man to sit in judgment on his fellow-sinners. God alone can determine that question. But I can tell you what their religious attitude and position were. Of these twenty there were—

Communicants in fact, or in intention	7
Persons who had disused the communion and who expressed themselves penitently.....	2
Non-communicants	10
Unknown	1

"One half died without any formal voluntary sacramental confession of their faith in Christ. It is sad, very sad to think of. The Lord grant that their blood may not be required of me!"

Mr. A. "That record must remind you of some solemn incidents."

Mr. W. "Indeed it does. I dare not tell you what holy, and again what awful memories it awakens. Some among them looked up to me and listened so meekly to my poor teachings, and died so sweetly and submissively! I must not talk about them. But here is one of whom I can tell.

"He was a musician in Barnum's travelling menagerie. In the gray dawn, the wagon on which he was riding upset, and he was killed instantly: this was near our village. The show went on as usual. But the next morning, Sunday, they came to ask that I would bury him, and the funeral escort proceeded from the large tent to the burying-ground.

"His fellow-musicians were the chief mourners: they wept bitterly while standing by the open grave. I reminded them that they too were travellers and sojourners, and that death must soon meet them on the way.

"When the words 'earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust,' were uttered, the roll of the muffled drum was added to the sound of the falling clods. And when all was ready for the grave to be filled up, they wiped away their tears and grasped their instruments, and then burst forth a dirge so wild and solemn as melted all our hearts.

"I did not know they could play so well: but the music came from their very souls. The fading sunlight, the subdued stillness of many hundreds gathered around, and then the heavy fall of the earth, which unconsciously kept time with that heart-broken strain, oh! I never can forget it. I thought of Robert Hall's famous

sentences—‘If it be lawful to indulge such a thought, what would be the funeral obsequies of a lost soul? Where shall we find the tears fit to be wept at such a spectacle? Or, could we realize the calamity in all its extent, what tokens of commiseration and concern would be deemed equal to the occasion? Would it suffice for the sun to veil his light and the moon her brightness? to cover the ocean with mourning and the heavens with sackcloth? or, were the whole fabric of nature to become animated and vocal, would it be possible for her to utter a groan too deep, a cry too piercing, to express the magnitude and extent of such a catastrophe?’”

Mr. Austen expressed, as might be expected, his admiration of this beautiful passage; and he added—

“We do too often listen to sermons about the uncertainty of life as if it all were mere declamation. I own my error: your record confirms all your positions. That I should die in my youth, and at a moment’s warning, and with no one to counsel and console me, would be by no means strange. I wish, indeed, that I were ready to die.”

Mr. Worthy saw that his young visitor was moved by the conversation: there was no more of that flippancy in his talk which had hitherto pained him. He saw that he would now bear a

plain dealing, which in a different mood might have offended him. He proceeded somewhat as follows:

"I should be glad if, as the result of this conversation, you should determine to count less certainly on the morrow, and give heed at once to your safety. But I must express my surprise that you seem to think of nothing except your own safety: all you seem to care for, is to make sure that you will not be wretched after death.

"Just consider: you are a young man still; you have a sense of honor and justice; you are grateful to those who do you kindness; you have sensibilities, and can spare a tear to the poor musician who falls by the wayside.

"And what did you this morning, according to your own account? You read an awful account of the mystery of guilt; how, rather than pass it by, Almighty God suffered His holy Son to agonize and die: a story of boundless compassion and mercy infinite, all offered to you; a tale of suffering, and patience, and goodness, that ought to break a man's heart. You ought to come from such a scene smiting upon your breast, angry with your sins, eager to do something for Him who did all for you. But no, you fastened your thoughts on one incident, and tried to persuade yourself from it, that you might with nice

calculation sin yet more, continue to evade all the claims of duty and of gratitude, and then make all right by a few sorrowful words in life's twilight. My friend, can it be that you cherish so poor a purpose as this? Do you let yourself think of religion only as a hateful necessity, a mournful alternative, to be preferred only to eternal punishment?"

The young man blushed deeply at this pointed appeal; he stammered forth something, half confession and half apology; but just then they were interrupted. Mr. Worthy did not regret it, for he knew that for the present enough had been said.

Reader! these are facts which we have laid before you; the plain, unvarnished tale of a parish register.

If you doubt whether it presents a fair statement, call over the roll of your own departed acquaintances. How many of them had fair warning of approaching death? How many were able to avail themselves of the warning?

Those are dangerous lines quoted by the speaker in the beginning of this tract. Say, rather, to your own heart—

"Hasten, sinner, to return;
Stay not for the morrow's sun,
Lest thy lamp should cease to burn,
Ere salvation's work is done."



Tracts for Missionary Use.
No. 9.

THE PROCESS OF CONVERSION.

A NARRATIVE.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1859,
By DANIEL DANA, JR.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern
District of New York.

THE PROCESS OF CONVERSION.

THE conversation reported in a former tract upon the subject of sudden death, was not without its results. From that time Mr. Worthy's young friend was much more thoughtful ; it was not many weeks before he frankly told the minister that he now desired to be a Christian, and availed himself of his counsel, and of the books which from time to time were offered him.

He soon found that these communications were very profitable. Sometimes difficulties which had sorely puzzled him were easily cleared up ; or perhaps he learned that the wisest and best of men were as much at a loss as himself, and that he must turn his thoughts to something more practical. Sometimes, when with timidity and difficulty he told his peculiar temptations and embarrassments, he was no little comforted to discover that Mr. Worthy heard them with calmness, and pointed out to him the fact that

other men had been tried and beset just as he was.

Should these lines meet the eyes of one who has long been the subject of religious anxiety, but who has locked up his fears, and hopes, and trials in his own bosom, we would earnestly entreat him to seek the man of God and open his grief. It is his wisdom so to do, as much as for the sick man to send for the physician, and disclose his symptoms. He little knows how much he may be benefited by the advice and sympathy of one whose business it is to show to wanderers the way of return.

But let us hasten on, and relate a conversation upon a subject of deepest interest. The young man was the first speaker.

"I have been studying the Prayer-book lately with a special object. I have often heard that the Episcopal Church does not require of her members conversion or a change of heart; that hers is a broad and easy way to heaven, which all may tread who avoid gross vice, and behave themselves decently. Never was there a greater mistake. The religion of the heart, the worship of the spirit, the sort of piety which makes a man take up his cross, and deny his flesh, and keep himself unspotted from the world—this is what I find in the Prayer-book everywhere. But

for all this, there is one thing I am not satisfied about, and yet I hardly know how to express the difficulty."

"Give me some idea of it; perhaps I can understand it."

"I mean this: I do not find any clear and distinct account given of what I may call the *Process of Conversion*. I would like to know how I must proceed, step by step, in my effort to be a Christian; and what is the turning-point, which, being passed, I may consider myself a child of God. Or, to explain myself more fully, I have been brought up in the midst of revivals, and have been accustomed to see a regular course of things. Thus, a careless man attends the meeting, and is 'convicted.' Next, he goes forward to the altar, or to the anxious-bench, to be prayed for; he remains for a while in great distress and anguish, and then he experiences relief. After this, the prayers are changed into thanksgivings, and he is congratulated by his friends as having become converted."

"I understand you perfectly. You have seen a regular course of proceeding, and a uniform train of religious experiences, through which every penitent is expected to pass. You do not find just this thing in the teachings and practices of the Church; and perhaps it is the absence of

this—the fact that people are baptized and confirmed without any public declaration of a religious purpose beforehand, which has given rise to the very prevalent notion that truly religious qualifications are not required for admission into the Church."

"Pray, sir, excuse my ignorance; but is there not a want of plainness in the ways and teachings of the Church on this subject? I am anxious to learn."

"There is nothing about the Church which seems to me more exactly right, and conformable to Scripture, than her course in these particulars. I think I can prove this.

"Sir, you are partly right and partly wrong in your notions. You are right in thinking that there must be taught a *religious system*; you are wrong in supposing that we ought to insist upon a *religious fashion*. Perhaps I am not very happy in selecting words; but it is plain that there are certain religious exercises, and duties, and experiences common to all truly religious people. These, properly expressed, and duly arranged, make up what I have called a religious system, and this the Church has. Other things there are, variable, accidental, peculiar to individuals, which have come into use through the influence of distinguished men, or by the force of

sympathy ; these I call *religious fashions*, using that word in no light or disrespectful sense—and of these the Church has none, so far as concerns the turning of a sinner to his God."

"I cannot say that I exactly understand your last remark."

"Why, take your own account of the revival system ; the going up to be prayed for, the alternations of feeling, the visible crisis, the congratulations,—you will find none of these laid down in the Bible as things that we must do in order to be saved. Take the story of the conversion of St. Paul, of the Ethiopian eunuch, of Lydia, of the multitude converted on the day of Pentecost. You must torture those histories in order to make them agree with the course of a revival, in the common sense of that word.

"I say all these things are mere fashions. The work of God goes on without them, and doubtless good has been done where they prevailed."

"But did you ever know of a revival where these things did not prevail ?"

"Yes, of several. But one in particular I was familiar with. It was in St. Paul's Church, Petersburg, when Dr. Cobbs was rector. It began with a pervading and increasing seriousness ; the people thronged to the church, and seemed anxious to hear. The services were increased in

number to meet the demand, until it soon became a daily service. Sermons were preached, adapted to the wants of those whose attention was awakened. So it went on for weeks ; no inquiry meetings ; no extraordinary appliances ; nothing but the solemn services of the Church, with faithful sermons and diligent pastoral visiting.

"And then came the Confirmation-day. No one knew what had been effected. When the candidates were requested to draw near, it seemed as if the whole congregation was in motion. Ninety-seven persons, every one of whom had held personal communication with the minister, and received his permission to be confirmed, drew near. In a few weeks afterwards a score or more were confirmed ; and I believe that in their subsequent life and conversation they have been exemplary and consistent."

"That is indeed a very remarkable instance, and shows that the mere fashion of procedure is a thing by itself." -

"The world has abounded in these fashions. Haircloth shirts, dirt, and vermin have sometimes been the fashion of repenting sinners. I could multiply illustrations. A New England gentleman told me that in his boyhood, when

remarkable religious excitements prevailed, it was the fashion to become desperate ; no man was deemed to be truly converted unless there had been a stage in his experience when he felt utterly reckless and defiant towards God.

"I think these things very injurious. They turn the thoughts of men aside from the one great necessity of yielding their affections and submitting their wills to Christ. Passing through a settled routine, they think all is well. And many a true penitent vexes his spirit and wears out his soul in the vain effort to feel as some one else feels, and to come up to an artificial standard of experience."

"You must allow, however, that there is something very plain and easy in this process. To tell you the truth, sir, it is only last week that I chanced to be present when there was a call for mourners. The preacher said that he had seen many thousands converted at the altar : 'Come up, poor sinner,' he said, 'and I promise you in my Master's name, you shall find grace and salvation.' Do you wonder, sir, that I was tempted to comply with his appeal ?"

"No, I do not wonder at it. But what right had he to say so ? Where is his warrant for ascribing such power to a human ordinance ? I dare not speak so unconditionally of the holy

sacraments which were instituted by our Lord himself. But there is a truth in this which we will talk about hereafter. We were talking about religious fashions."

"Excuse me, sir, but I am somewhat impatient to reach the other branch of the subject. Although the Church does not teach any arbitrary process of conversion, there is, you said, a certain system, a natural course of feeling and doing, which she enforces. Explain that to me."

"I will try to do so. And we must notice the fact, that the Church's first and chief solicitude is to obviate the necessity of a sudden and violent conversion. She insists that this can be done by careful religious nurture, with a devout reliance on God's gracious aid. Must a Christian child, my innocent little one, for instance, of necessity serve an apprenticeship to the world, the flesh, and the devil, and then be recovered out of it, just as if he were an unbaptized heathen? She tolerates no such doctrine. She insists, that being made in baptism a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom, he may, by God's grace, continue in that same state of salvation even unto his life's end. There is no reason why a Christian child should not advance steadily to Christian man-

hood, daily increasing in the Holy Spirit more and more."

"But, sir, does not that view conflict with our notions of religion as an intelligent and voluntary choice? Does it not make him a mere puppet in his sponsor's hands?"

"Not at all. All the teachings of his childhood are an appeal to his intelligence; all the means used are designed to influence his will and bring it into conformity to the will of God. What the preacher would do in a few hours, the parents and sponsors do day by day and little by little. And besides, when the child is of a suitable age, Confirmation is appointed, in order that he may expressly and deliberately form and pronounce his religious choice."

"But is not this rather a theory than anything else? In actual life do any children thus grow up Christians?"

"Yes, I have known not a few such. I should be ashamed to expect any thing less for my own children. True, many turn aside to folly. How can it be otherwise when there is so little faith in the reality of baptismal blessing, and no one expects religious principle in a child?"

(We must ask permission of our readers to discuss this matter in its own place.)

"It is a beautiful theory," said the young man,

"and I do not oppose it; but come now to my own case. I was baptized in infancy, and have come to manhood all unsanctified. I have need to be converted and to become as a little child. Now what course is marked out for me to pursue?"

"I think I can give you a precise answer. You have neglected and, in effect, renounced your baptism. The Church says you must now solemnly acknowledge it and renew its vows in Confirmation. You have placed yourself among this world's people; you must now join yourself to your brethren who come to feed at the table of the Lord."

"Oh, Mr. Worthy, I did not think you would answer me thus. Surely my case needs more searching remedies than ordinances and sacraments. I am not fit for Confirmation or Communion."

"Just so, just so; this is the very thing I want you to see. The Church tells you that you must come to the sacrament; that it is dangerous to receive it unworthily, for it is a most holy feast. Her very urgency makes you feel your unfitness, and prepares you to listen to her counsels touching the preparation you must make. The revival preacher the other night entreated you to come to the altar, and promised you that you

should find mercy. Now I say to you, come to this holy feast, and I will assure you, in the name of the living God, and by His authority committed to me, of pardon for all the past, and grace to help you in the future ; but, *provided always, that you come with a true penitent heart, with a living faith in Christ, with an honest purpose to keep the law of God.*"

"But, sir, I am not a converted man ; I am in my sins. Oh, I wish the Church had pointed out some plain course that I ought to pursue."

"She has done that very thing. After our explanations I can now point you to the very thing you ask ; the course and process, if you will, of conversion."

Mr. Worthy then read the following passage out of the exhortation preparatory to the Communion :

"The way and means thereto is : First, to examine your lives and conversations by the rule of God's commandments : and whereinsoever ye shall perceive yourselves to have offended, either by will, word, or deed, there to bewail your own sinfulness, and to confess yourselves to Almighty God, with full purpose of amendment of life. And if ye shall perceive your offences to be such as are not only against God, but also against your neighbors ; then ye shall reconcile yourselves unto them ; being ready to make restitution and satisfaction, according to the uttermost of your powers, for all injuries and wrongs done by you to

any other; and being likewise ready to forgive others who have offended you, as ye would have forgiveness of your offences at God's hand: for otherwise the receiving of the holy Communion doth nothing else but increase your condemnation."

"Now these directions may not be as precise as you would desire, but they are as precise as they ought to be. There is no such thing as a formal routine through which you can pass and come forth a true child of God. Analyze, if you please, what is told us in these passages. The Church would place in your hands the Bible, and send you into your closet. Read in that volume what you ought to be: then pause, look over the past and into your heart, and see what you have been. This review fills you with shame and grief; for you have offended by will, word, and deed, and for your many evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished.

"What shall you do? Kneel right down, and with all your heart and soul confess your evil deeds; hide none of them: say with Achan, 'Indeed, I have sinned against the Lord, and thus and thus have I done.' You must bewail them, too. Think how ungrateful you have been to a patient and gracious Father, and how regardless of that Saviour who gave Himself for you: think how by these sins you have defiled and

degraded yourself, and almost lost your soul : think how you have grieved the Holy Ghost, and resisted Him, obeying instead, the voice of the world, the flesh, and the devil ; and let your heart pour out itself in the publican's prayer, or in such words as these :

“ ‘ I do earnestly repent, and am heartily sorry for these my misdoings ; the remembrance of them is grievous unto me ; the burden of them is intolerable ; have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me, most merciful Father ; for thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, forgive me all that is past ; and grant that I may ever hereafter serve and please Thee in newness of life.’ ”

“ But this is not the whole of repentance ; you must truly resolve and promise to amend your life, to cease from evil, and begin to do well. Without any delay, you must at once set yourself to repair any injury you have done to man, to restore any thing of which you are wrongfully possessed, and to reconcile yourself to all those with whom you have been on unfriendly terms. Is not all this plain and reasonable ? ”

“ Exceedingly so ; any man who really desires to be religious can at least try to do this.”

“ You must observe, too, that in all these efforts, you are to have a thankful remembrance of the death of Christ, and a lively faith in His

merits and atonement. You are to plant yourself, as it were, in full view of the cross, and rest all your hopes of pardon upon the one sacrifice there made for our sins. ‘O Saviour of the world, who, by thy cross and precious blood, hast redeemed us, save us and help us, we humbly beseech thee, O Lord !’ This is the cry which every penitent should utter from the very depths of the soul. And, my friend, we have the most abundant warrant of the Bible for saying, that whenever these things concur, whenever a man searches his spirit as in God’s sight, truly confesses and bewails his sins with a sincere desire to sin no more, and throws himself upon that mercy of God which is brought to us in His dear Son, he is truly converted ; he is saved from wrath ; he is fit and ready to receive from God’s minister the assurance of sins forgiven.”

“ Mr. Worthy, I am almost afraid to say it ; but do you know that I think I have done all these things ? I have tried to recall all my errors, and confessed them, and promised to abandon them, if the Lord would help me. And sir,”—here the young man’s voice choked, and he hid his face, as he added, “ last Sunday night I did, as best I could, give myself up to the Saviour, and resolved, that if I could not be happy in His favor I would be happy in nothing else.”

"I thank God for His mercy; the snare is broken, and you are delivered. My friend, what else can a poor sinner do than what you have related? Can you not believe that your Heavenly Father heard and accepted that vow?"

"But, sir, I do not think I have felt enough or repented enough. I was calm and quiet, when it seemed that if I had realized what I was doing, my whole soul would have been full of sorrow and trouble."

"I do not think you have repented enough, or felt enough: the best of us are very cold and insensible. But the question for you to consider is, have you *truly* and *really* repented? Are you sincere and honest in your professions of sorrow, and in your resolutions of amendment?"

"I hope I am; I think I am; I hardly know what to say. I wish I could determine the matter. We have not exhausted the subject of our conversation: you have pointed out the course and progress of the returning sinner: pray, is there no crisis—no turning-point—no moment when the old life ends and the new begins?"

"Yes, there is such a moment, although the penitent himself is not able to recognize it, nor feels in himself any new conviction. In the counsel of God, our sins are forgiven in that moment

when we truly say, O God, thy will be done! In the annals of time that forgiveness is pledged and made over to us when we draw near and openly profess our purposes of obedience.

“I think the case of Zaccheus is very instructive. ‘Zaccheus stood forth and said, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.’

“Here was an entire and unconditional surrender; here was the right hand of sin mercilessly and courageously cut off. And what said our Lord? ‘*This day* is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.’

“In that moment when a man, by the grace of God helping him, so conquers his carnal will, that he truly resolves to take up his cross and follow Christ; so that he honestly protests—‘AND HERE I OFFER AND PRESENT UNTO THEE, O LORD, MYSELF, MY SOUL AND BODY, TO BE A REASONABLE, HOLY, AND LIVING SACRIFICE UNTO THEE’—in that moment the last obstacle to his salvation is removed, and he is in the light and love of God.

“And this, no matter what his feelings are; the struggle may have been intense; the demon may tear him as he departs, and leave him half

dead, gasping, moaning, dizzy ; I tell you, *if his self-will is conquered, the man is saved.*"

"Indeed, that must be so. It is reasonable ; it is scriptural ; I will not, I dare not doubt it. If I can only resign my will to God, salvation in that day will visit me, and I shall be a son of faithful Abraham,—of him who, at the call of God, bound as a victim his son, his only son Isaac. I see it now ; there can be no mistake about it."

"Well, then, apply the test to your own case. How stands it with you ? Are you ready now to surrender yourself, soul and body, into the hands of God, content to do and to suffer what He ordains, without any reservation whatever ?"

"Almost, Mr. Worthy. I am willing to do almost any thing."

"That will not suffice. You must leave all, and follow Christ."

"I have resolved to forsake my sins ; to overcome my pride, and make friends with several people whom I have really hated—"

"But to keep back part of the price ?"

The young man was silent.

"What is it ?" said Mr. Worthy.

"Oh, I cannot tell you !" and he leaned upon the table, and hid his face.

"What is it ?" said Mr. Worthy, with a voice

almost of command; and when there was no answer, he came near, laid his hand upon his shoulder, and in an altered tone, of singular gentleness and pity, said:

“What is it, my dear friend, that you cannot leave for Christ?”

“I will tell you, then; you shall know all;” and the young man proceeded with rapid and almost incoherent phrase:

“I am young; and they say I have talent. I hoped to be a lawyer, and to distinguish myself; and the other day it came into my head that if I were a Christian I might have to enter the ministry—and I am not willing—to be everybody’s servant—to be sneered at, and ridiculed, as I hear silly people talk even of you—”

Mr. Worthy looked with a pleasant, pitying smile upon the young man, as he again buried his face in his hands.

“And so that is your cross: Satan, almost cast out, has thrown himself into this last fortress. Come now, up with the cross, and ‘get thee behind me, Satan.’”

There was no reply.

“Would you not like to have some evidence of your sincerity; some sure proof that you do love the Lord Jesus Christ?”

The young man assented.

"Well then, say, Here is a cross, and I am offended at it; my pride rebels, my selfishness cries out against it. But say, O my Master, Thou didst give up all for me,—heaven and glory, comfort and good name: I will make this sacrifice for love's sake and for Thee. Will it not be pleasant to think, hereafter, that in one thing at least you gave up all for Christ?"

No word of answer, and Mr. Worthy paced the room in silence.

"The controversy is now all narrowed down to this one point. You must go forward or go backward. God must have all or nothing. Are you willing, if it shall seem to be your duty, to give up all your plans, and be an humble minister of the Lord?"

There was another pause; the young man raised his head, and his features worked convulsively as he gazed into the face of his counsellor. At last said he, with a calm and solemn voice—

"I am content to be a minister, if God shall call me." Strange, how in after days he loved that ministry, and valued it above a crown!

The next Sunday this young man was found among those who surrounded the Holy Table. A trace of suffering was on his brow, evidencing the severity of the conflict out of which he had come; but, as he received the consecrated em-

blems, there came up from his crushed and broken heart the cry, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Reader! almost Christian, and not far from the kingdom of God! what is *your* one besetting sin, which you are not willing to surrender? What is *your* one sacrifice which you cannot agree to make for Christ's sake?

Make haste, brother. Take up your cross. It is vain to dally about it. It is that or nothing that God will have. Up with it, then! dash away the tear. Up with it, manfully! You can bear it, if you will.

Tracts for Missionary Use.
No. 10.

VISITATION OF PRISONERS.

A NARRATIVE.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1859,

By DANIEL DANA, Jr.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern
District of New York.

VISITATION OF PRISONERS.

PETER, a servant, was found guilty of murder, and condemned to die for the offence. He had borne an excellent character as a servant, until he had fallen into habits of intemperance. His crime was committed in a drunken phrensy.

On first visiting him in his cell, I said nothing to him about the crime for which he was condemned, but tried rather to gain his confidence, and learn something of his character. He had never “professed religion;” had tried to “get religion” twice; was seeking it once for eighteen months, but was provoked into the use of profane expressions, and left off praying. He knew the Lord’s Prayer, and repeated it to me; did not know the Creed or the Ten Commandments. Add to this, that he was not at all deficient in intelligence, that he could read a little, and knew something of the Scripture history, that he was every way inclined to be instructed and assisted

in preparation for death, and a just idea may be formed of the case.

The first effort was to persuade him of the existence of sympathy in his behalf. Holding the Prayer-book forth (he had been occasionally at church, and knew something of its uses), I asked him if he thought there was any thing there specially intended for him. His attention was called to these directions of the Church : "When any person is sick, notice shall be given thereof to the minister of the parish, who, coming into the sick person's house, shall say," &c. And again : "When notice is given to the minister that a prisoner is confined for some great or capital crime, he shall visit him." The Church's care for sick and sorrowful people was brought out, and then the office for the Visitation of Prisoners was read distinctly and slowly, and without many comments. All this interested and awed him.

On seeing him again, the conversation was turned at once to the plan of salvation. I tried to explain to him that God has sent His Son to justify, and His Spirit to sanctify us ; that these mercies are offered to the very vilest. These points were illustrated in various ways, and it was explained how and why repentance and faith are necessary, although they are in

nowise an atonement for our sins. And then, losing sight of other things, the talk narrowed down to repentance.

He said that he did try to repent; that he had thought over every thing he had ever said and done, and prayed the Lord to forgive him. But his heart was not softened yet, it felt "mighty hard," and he feared there was no forgiveness for him. All this was said quietly, and without the freedom of communication that was desired.

Subsequently, having apparently won his confidence, a tone of greater severity was used. I began to talk to him of murder. In a simple way, its history was recited, from Abel down to Christ. He was reminded what a sacred thing is human life; how God has hedged it around, and counts us more profane than Uzzah, if we dare lay rude hands, much more violent hands upon it. The law of Moses about accidental killing, the measuring from a man found dead to find the nearest city, and the solemn protest of the Elders that they were guiltless of that blood, the provision of cities of refuge, and the like, seemed to impress him forcibly. I persuaded him that murder, in its most hateful aspect, is the sin of profaning what God has made holy, of pushing, as it were, the Almighty

from His throne, and attempting to be judge and avenger.

Then murder was dwelt upon, in its human aspect: the guilt of hurrying a fellow-creature suddenly into eternity, of depriving mother, wife, children, of their stay and support, the encouragement afforded to evil by such an example. In all this I had his undivided attention. He said it made him see the truth more plainly, and he thanked me on several occasions for taking the pains to deal so frankly with him. And then, bowing down his head despairingly, but without much evidence of emotion, he added, it seemed nobody “had ever done so bad” as he, and he was afraid he could not be forgiven.

I asked him why he did not send some suitable acknowledgment to the bereaved family, and ask their pardon. He said he had done them all the harm that could be done them, and words could not mend it: besides, he did not see how they could forgive him.

To this it was replied, that confession was a necessary part of repentance; that in his case a particular confession of the sin for which he was condemned, and an express humbling of himself before those whom he had wronged, could not be dispensed with. It might seem a poor thing to say, “I have sinned against the Lord,” but

one must say it; and when others had been injured they must go further, and say, "Thus and thus have I done."

He said, in reply, that he was different from some people; he never did talk much; it was always hard for him to cry; even when in pain, he was not used to "speak above his breath." And now he was so bowed down, it seemed not worth while to say any thing.

I considered a while, and said to him pointedly, "Peter, people thought you seemed careless and hardened when the judge passed sentence on you." He raised himself in a moment and asked, "What did I do, sir? did I say any thing wrong, or misbehave myself to the judge?"

"No, but you seemed like you did not care about what you had done, they said."

"They told me to stand up there, and I did just as they told me. I was so troubled and scared I didn't know any thing, and couldn't see,—and the people thought I was hardened and didn't care about having done so badly!" Here his fortitude gave way; he sobbed and wept convulsively. I was not sorry to see that his emotions were aroused, and, after some kind words, assuring him that the Lord judges us truly, left him alone.

On the next visit he spoke much more freely;

gave me some account of his history and circumstances; assured me that his crime was not pre-meditated for a single moment, and that he was horrified when he saw his victim lifeless at his feet. He accused himself with much more earnestness, and said that night and day he kept trying to humble himself and to find forgiveness.

It must not be supposed, that up to this point the law only had been held up. The mercy of God, the merits of the Saviour, the excellence of faith, were often alluded to, although repentance had been kept in the foreground.

Now, however, I dropped that theme, and spoke to him of mercy; and on several occasions, and with many words, sought to persuade him that Christ Jesus came into the world to save, not good people, but *sinners*. The lost sheep, the prodigal son, the mercy shown to Peter, to Saul, to the dying thief,—these, and like instances of mercy, were pressed upon him, and he was urged to trust the Saviour.

I tried to explain to him the nature of this saving trust, and, in appearance, he grasped the meaning of it.

And now he expressed the difficulty that he felt no sense of pardon; his chain was heavy; he could not feel that he was forgiven.

I told him that I hoped and prayed some measure of peace and comfort might be given him, but that these did not always go with pardon: that the dying experience of mature saints would be unnatural in his case, and that I desired chiefly for him to have this prayer in his heart and on his lips, “God be merciful to me a sinner!”

And now baptism, which had been often alluded to, was distinctly presented. And here the reader may, perhaps, see what practical use there is in the doctrine of Apostolic succession. For the sake of clearness, let us distinguish the several views presented to him.

1. In all important matters there ought to be some conclusive agreement. When men bargain, they talk and debate, it may be, a good while; at last they strike hands over their agreement, and the matter is ended. Even so, the Lord has offered to forgive you, and told you what His terms are. You have studied the matter, and done what you could: so far as you know yourself, you are willing to give yourself as a vile sinner, to be saved by grace. Now, in baptism you do thus yield yourself. You say, solemnly, “I have sinned against the Lord;” and the minister says, “The Lord hath also put away thy sin.” Thus dealt Ananias with Saul. “Now

why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized." What was Saul waiting for? He might lie in darkness and tears for years instead of days, and his ease would be no better. He had learned to know himself a sinner, and Christ his Saviour; and he must arise, and call on God, and take his place among the pardoned.

2. What is it "to come to Christ?" You would come to Christ if you knew how; you are trying to come to Him in prayer, in repentance, in faith. But, oh! if you could only come as the sinful woman came, and lay your hands upon Him! Well, you can so come. Christ is here on earth, in His Church, in the person of His minister; and it adds reality to our religious acts to approach Him thus. Our Lord considered that we are bodies as well as souls; and so He provides a way in which we can approach Him with the act of the mind, and of the body as well.

3. You want grace to help you. You feel your need of the Holy Spirit; for I am sure, even in this solemn time, I am sure you find many bad thoughts coming into your mind. (Here Peter interrupted me to say, that some good people had been telling him that every thought and every breath ought to be a prayer. But it did not seem possible; all sorts of things

would come into his mind, and he got where he could not pray any more.)

You want the Holy Spirit of God to help you. Now that Spirit is given to us in many ways ; but His presence is covenanted, after a special sort, to the sacraments, when we rightly use them. Then I explained the conversation with Nicodemus, and showed him how the new birth was of water and the Holy Ghost together. How strange this seemed to Nicodemus ; and how strange to Naaman, that washing in Jordan could cure his leprosy. But, just as the Saviour with clay opened the blind man's eyes, so the Blessed Spirit sanctifies water, and bread, and wine, and through them imparts blessing to His penitent people.

The difficulty, however, still recurred, that he had no sense of pardon—no token that the mercy of the Gospel was for him, Peter. He did not think it right to be baptized until he had a feeling of sin forgiven. In meeting this difficulty I was led to speak with some repetition :

5. Of the important place in the plan of salvation which the Church occupies.

I reminded him how often we are enjoined in the Bible to “come to Christ.” This command does not seem plain to many. They wish they knew how to come.

What does it mean? When Christ was yet in the world, those whom He summoned could really come. They could leave their nets and follow Him; they could come and embrace His feet, or touch the hem of His garment; and one sometimes wishes that he had lived in those days, and enjoyed such opportunities.

But we need not wish it; we can now come to Christ as really as if He were on the earth. We can come to Him, as those holy people did, in repentance and in prayer; and when we do thus, He is as near to us as He was to them, and hears our words as distinctly as He did their cries for help. Yet this is not all. Would you like to come to Him with your body as well as your spirit? to have Him lay His hand upon you? to hear Him say to you, for yourself, Go in peace, thy sins be forgiven thee? Well, then, you may have this privilege. There are ministers who stand in the place of Christ, and administer holy sacraments in His name. When you come to them, and say in a solemn way that you take the Saviour for your master, it is all the same as if you said it to Him in person; and when they tell you, Go in peace, it is Jesus Christ who speaks by their mouth. For we are ambassadors for Christ, and act in His stead.

A ready illustration here suggested itself. We

have talked about the importance of your asking pardon of those mourners whom your act has bereaved, and you ought not to be easy without it. You are confined in this cell, and cannot get to them; and there are good reasons why they should not come to this place. But you can send them a message, and they can send you a message. And a message of forgiveness, expressly sent to you by some one whom they have asked to carry it, is a very different thing from a mere report of the same thing by an unauthorized person.

See how the case stands. After our Lord had died for us, He might have given us the Bible. It would have been a great thing to have had safely written in the Book that all persons, without mentioning any one in particular, may be forgiven, if they will trust in Him. But this did not satisfy Him. He wanted each one of us to have that precious promise sealed to him, for himself and by himself. And so he called certain men, whom he named apostles, and said, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." They were to seek sinners, just as He had sought them; they were to go and preach the good news to many persons together, as He had been used to do; and then they were to baptize—that is, to receive individual sinners, one by

one, and declare their sins forgiven. And He promised to be with those messengers always, even to the end of the world. The good news is not only like something published to everybody in a newspaper—it is like a letter passed from hand to hand. He sent the apostles, and they sent another set of men, and they another, and so on from age to age; and at last the right to speak for the Saviour has travelled all the way down to me, and I come right to you in this prison, and tell you that the Lord Jesus has sent me to let you know, that, wickedly as you have behaved, He is willing to forgive you. Now this message comes from the blessed Saviour, because His ambassadors come to you in His name, and speak by His authority.

You must not think, I added, that I am making much of myself. In the court-house there may be men as wise and as good as the judge, but nobody except the judge has the right to pronounce sentence one way or another. Just so I may be the least of all the saints, but because the Lord has sent me, has made me His officer, I speak to you with authority, and my message to you is from God.

Peter seemed to be much impressed with these views; but he was at a loss—he had thought about all he had ever done, and prayed night

and day for pardon ; he hardly knew how it was with him. The conversation then turned more definitely on baptism.

I said to him, You know that it will not do to keep on talking and thinking forever ; there is a proper time when we should settle questions. I have come to you, and told you on what conditions the Lord will pardon. You tell me that you do repent in dust and ashes ; you make no excuse for yourself, and have no hope but in the merits of the Saviour. What comes next ? Stand up on your feet to be baptized ; say to God's minister, I have sinned against the Lord ; and it is his duty to answer back, The Lord hath also put away thy sin. You must believe that He is in earnest ; that He does forgive His penitent people, and from that faith, comfort and peace will flow.

Peter next demanded whether there was not danger in being baptized ; might it not make his case worse ?

Yes, I said, there is a danger ; a man's case may be the worse for being baptized : there was a man once in this very cell whom I dared not baptize, and whom I earnestly advised to avoid uttering expressions of trust and resignation.

Why ? asked Peter.

Because that man had no concern for his wick-

edness, except for the pain that followed it. He did not so much as try to extend forgiveness to persons who had wronged him, as he supposed. The answers of the baptismal service in his mouth would have been an awful falsehood. And so I plainly tell you, you must be very careful. You must pray for the Spirit of God to help you to know your own mind and will. If, after searching yourself with humble prayer to God, it seems to you, as far as you can make out, that you are grieved and sorry for your sins, and desire to have a clean heart; that you do trust in the Saviour, and desire to bear patiently this sentence which God has suffered to come upon you, there is no danger. But be faithful to yourself, and be very careful not to profess any thing which, as far as you know, is not the honest feeling of your heart.

He answered, that he would like to think the whole subject over; and would prefer that I should baptize him the next morning. He was to be executed the next day, within the prison-walls, and was satisfied for me to pay my last visit at an early hour, rather than towards the time of execution.

At the appointed hour I was again in his cell, passing some brethren of his own color, who had been with him. He looked well; had slept com-

fortably, more soundly than for many days. There was an air of greater composure about him, and he said that he had tried to cast all his burden on the Lord, and was not without hope that he might find acceptance.

But how men do yearn for something distinct and definite, something palpable to sense, to strengthen the conviction of their minds! He began to tell me, that in a doze, about day, he had seen a light, which stood a while and then vanished. I gently drew him away from the subject, and he readily spoke of other things. What else was said cannot now be recalled, for one thought was uppermost,—that here was one whose hours were numbered, and who at mid-day would pass into that solemn rest where intercession is in vain, and where the defects of repentance can never be supplied. He kneeled down and was baptized; the prayer for the dying was said; the Church's solemn blessing was pronounced, and the sinful man was left, not without a hope that his repentance was sincere.

It is not easy to minister aright to men lying thus fast bound in misery and iron. We must go in the fulness of the Gospel; we must plainly pronounce its sentence against sin, and earnestly press the mercy it has for sinners. But more than this, we must feel strong in the assurance

of a divine commission, awed in view of official responsibility. Disputation, timidity, private interpretations, suit not the exigency. The man of God must speak "as one having authority, and *not* as the Scribes."

Tracts for Missionary Use.
No. 11.

THE MEANING OF POMPS AND VANITIES.

A STORY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1859,

BY DANIEL DANA, JR.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern
District of New York.

THE MEANING OF POMPS AND VANITIES.

AMONG the interesting congregation which, in the lapse of years, gathered around Mr. Worthy, we must now make mention of two sisters, differing in age but a single year. The elder had just passed her eighteenth year. Their friends called them, playfully, Minna and Brenda, and we shall so call them in this little story. It matters not what their form and features were ; all young people are engaging whose faces wear the expression of intelligence, honesty, and kindness.

And these were interesting young girls, with faults and good qualities, just like other people. Minna was energetic and decided in her character, but with a spice of temper and self-will, which gave her some trouble. Brenda was mild and gentle, but deficient in fortitude of character, and too easily influenced by those in whose society she was thrown. Their mother had care-

fully attended to their early religious training ; but at the time of this narrative they had just returned from a distant school, where they had spent two years.

The sisters were not slow in making acquaintance at the rectory. Minna loved to romp with the little ones, and to entice little James, by the bribe of a lump of sugar, into pronouncing impossible words ; while Brenda was never so happy as when she had the baby crowing and laughing in her arms.

Surely it is pleasant to see how fond people are of their minister's children. Is it not because kindness to the little ones is an easy and unembarrassing way of expressing their goodwill to him ?

It was towards sunset, on a beautiful morning in the spring, that Mr. Worthy sat in the verandah of the rectory with a book in his hand. His eye rested occasionally on a happy group—Minna and Brenda, amusing the children, whose mother was elsewhere engaged in the mysterious duties of housekeeping. Presently the nurse came for the children, and the young ladies approached the house.

"What a tiny bit of a book," said Minna, looking at the volume which Mr. Worthy laid down at their approach. "I thought you min-

isters read none but great books, full of learning."

"It is a little book," said Mr. Worthy, "but I have found a great deal in it to think about. See its title—RENUNCIATION. It is by Dr. Bedell, and is intended to advise young persons like yourselves."

"I suppose, then," said Minna, "it refers to pomps and vanities."

"Yes, it does; but come, sit down on the settee, and let me talk to you a while. I hope that both of you are trying to prepare yourselves for Confirmation; it is only six weeks off, you know."

The girls were a little abashed at the first direct approach to this subject, but in a moment Brenda answered:

"Minna and I have talked about it, sir; but it is a very serious thing, and Minna says—"

"Oh, sister, that is not fair," interrupted the elder, "to tell Mr. Worthy my hasty speeches."

"Well, then, tell me yourself, Miss Minna. I hope it was nothing very bad. Do tell me, what is the greatest difficulty you see in your way?"

"I did say, and I think so still, that if we are confirmed we shall have to promise so much; more than I dare promise. You explained to us last Sunday, that in Confirmation we promise

over again, all and every thing that sponsors promised for us when we were baptized. It seems to me, nobody except a perfect saint could undertake all that."

"Thank you, Miss Minna, for telling me just what you think. We ought to be careful what we promise. But, suppose we look at these promises or professions one by one; there are but four of them; the four questions and answers in the baptismal office. What is the first of them?"

"Oh, I know it by heart," said Minna; "that first promise is the hard one: if I am confirmed, it will be the same as saying I do renounce, over again, and forever, 'the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of this world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh, so that I will not follow nor be led by them.' It seems to me the same as promising to be like an angel, and never to sin any more."

"Sister," said Brenda, "you forget: the question is as you repeat it, but the answer is, 'I will endeavor, by God's help, not to follow nor be led by them.'"

"Certainly," added the minister. "It is not, I *will not follow*; that is too much for any one to undertake; there is presumption in any such

vow: but add these two conditions, *I will endeavor*, and *by God's help*, and the case is altered. What less can one promise, than that he will *try*, *with the Lord's help*, not to follow the ways of sin?"

Brenda observed that she had noticed that, not only in the baptismal service, but in all the offices of the Prayer-book; as, in the ordination of ministers, the language always is, "I will so be, by the help of God," "I will so do, the Lord being my helper."

"But, sir," continued Minna, "the first part of it is positive and express; there is no *try* about it. I RENOUNCE THEM ALL: it is as much as to say, I will never say or do any thing wicked as long as I live; it is as bold a promise as Peter ever made."

"I think, Miss Minna, we are agreed on one point: we may promise, but we must not boast; we may say I will, I have the mind or will to, do thus and so, while we disclaim the power to live up to our will. But we can say I renounce; we ought to say it.

"What does renounce mean? The dictionary says, to deny, to disclaim, to disavow, to repudiate. You cannot serve two masters: and when about to undertake anew the service of Christ, it is right and proper, first of all, to renounce all

other gods. You are making a choice: on the one side is Christ, on the other, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Of these last you say, I renounce them all; they are not my masters; I owe them no service; I ask of them no favors: know all men, by these presents, that I this day take Christ for my portion, and surrender all friendships and alliances inconsistent with His service."

"But, sir," suggested Brenda, "ought we to say I renounce, until we feel sure that we will never serve them any more?"

"My little friend, we are sure of nothing which depends on us that has not yet happened. The present time is ours, the future is with God. Our business is to make this renunciation with an honest and true heart, meaning what we say; and then day by day we must ask the help of God, to enable us to live up to that profession.

"Let us take an instance of renunciation that is not so strictly religious. In 1776 our forefathers said, in a solemn and deliberate manner, We renounce the king and parliament of Great Britain. They said this at the beginning, not at the end of the strife: they did not fight first and renounce afterwards. No, when the future was dark, the event uncertain, and dangers innumerable were in the way, they took their stand.

Just so in the Christian life ; you are to fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil ; the struggle will end only with life itself ; and the Christian soldier, as he puts on his armor, cries first, I do renounce. If you are truly and honestly minded to give up these unlawful masters, the word renounce is not hard to utter."

"I think I understand you," said Minna. "In Baptism and Confirmation we sign our declaration of independence ; it takes but a minute to sign, and then a whole lifetime to maintain it."

"And we must renounce boldly," added Brenda ; "not because we are stronger than our masters, the world, the flesh, and the devil, but because we believe the Lord is on our side."

"That is faith," said the minister. "It is faith that makes renunciation so noble a thing. How beautiful it is to see a poor, weak, sin-laden creature stand up before men and angels, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, renounce his old masters ! Where such words are rightly uttered, there is a rare union of courage and humility.

"But, young ladies, before you say this, consider well what you are renouncing. There is, first of all, the devil, and all his works ; all falsehood and lying ; all pride and obstinacy ; in short, every thing to which the wicked spirits persuade you. You renounce, too, the sinful

desires of the flesh ; such things as immodesty, intemperance in eating and drinking, sensuality, idleness, and all that we generally include under the name of self-indulgence."

"I think I can go that far," said Minna. "I know that I too often follow the persuasions of the devil, and am led away by my love of ease ; but still I desire to be delivered from them, and can freely renounce them. But, sir, it is that other thing that troubles me. How can I renounce the world and give up its pleasures ?"

"Not its pleasures. You need not renounce them. Its pomps, and vanities, and covetous desires—these are what you renounce."

"Pray, sir, tell us what these words mean."

"With much pleasure. God has placed us, my young friends, in a very beautiful world ; much there is for use, for beauty, and for enjoyment. We may use, and admire, and enjoy, but only within the limits of duty to our God. The Christian must not be greedy of gain, nor anxious for applause and admiration, nor silly and trifling. Christian women must set an example of moderation and simplicity, avoiding all extravagance and ostentation. It is needless to encourage them to wear rings and jewels, and plait their hair. Doubtless, the Lord who gave the birds such gay clothing, never intended His creatures

to make themselves ugly; but then the apostle says these things must not be ‘their adorning.’ The ornaments they must chiefly care for are good works, the meek and quiet spirit.

“And again, the world in which you live cares little for the laws of God; many of its ways are evil, its customs pernicious, its amusements dangerous. You must renounce every indulgence and amusement which is unbecoming in a Christian, which is calculated to do you injury, which will hinder you from preserving habitually a heavenly mind, and a holy temper.”

“Mr. Worthy,” said Minna, rather abruptly, “just tell me one thing. Do you let your members go to balls and theatres? If I am confirmed, must I promise to give up all my expected pleasure?”

Now, reader, we have reached the real difficulty. These young people were looking forward to a trip to New Orleans the next winter, and had mingled with better thoughts not a few gay dreams of amusement.

“My little friend,” said the minister, “you make several mistakes. For I have not any members, but only a few sheep in the wilderness, whom I can persuade, but not compel to walk in the right way. You are to promise me nothing;

I shall be satisfied if you promise that which Christ and His Church exact."

"But must I give up cards, and the theatre and all those amusements—fashionable amusements, as they are called?"

"Why do you ask me?"

"Because I have heard your notions of worldly conformity are very strict; and you do not like the people to engage in these things."

"What do you think about them yourself?"

"Surely they cannot be wrong; in the large cities everybody indulges in them."

"I doubt that much," said Mr. Worthy. "But what do *you* think about them?"

"There is no law of the Church against them."

"Still you do not reach the main point. I want to know whether you think these indulgences are suitable for a Christian? I want to know whether with a card-party, a ball, and an opera-ticket in prospect, you could stand up in the Church, and say, like an honest girl, I renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world?"

Minna was confused, and did not answer, but Brenda replied:

"Indeed, sir, I should be afraid to do any such thing. We cannot carry our cross in any such company: it will not answer to renounce

'the pomps and vanities, and then persuade ourselves that there are no such things."

"But why does not the Church have rules about all these things?" continued Minna.

"Because she wants you to be a woman, not a child; a free agent, not a puppet. Laws are to restrain from gross crime; but love must be its own law. Obedience loses all its charms when it is forced by laws and penalties.

"The Church teaches you to pray in private and in public; you do not want a law to prescribe how many hours you must spend in that employment. In the same way she requires you to promise that you will not follow the world's evil; she gives ministers to advise and counsel you; but in a thousand instances you must follow the dictates of a sanctified conscience. It is not every thing that can be measured in feet and inches. No human being is ingenious enough to say exactly what amusements are harmless, and what are wicked. No: your duty is honestly to renounce all things evil, and then, as occasions arise, to ask yourself, as in the sight of God, Is this thing fairly included in my renunciation?"

"And do you think all these things are so very wicked?"

"I do. I know no good that comes of cards,

balls, theatres, and the like dissipation ; the sober judgment of Christian people is against them. One of the bishops lately said to me, They are dancing the Church to death. I have labored and prayed to keep my people away from all these things, and intend to do so while I live."

" And so," said Minna, gathering her bonnet to depart, " you think me too wicked to be confirmed."

" Miss Minna, I know you to be a truthful woman. Now tell me, honor bright, would you respect me, were I to encourage you to say, I renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, while, at the moment, you intend to plunge into the very midst of them ? Out with it, now, and speak truth from the heart."

" You are right, Mr. Worthy ; and I am a sinful, worldly-minded girl. But please do not say any thing more to me now. I will think about what you have said, and try to do right."

And the young ladies hastened home. During the few weeks that followed, Mr. Worthy's time and thoughts were largely occupied with the young people. Numbers of them attended the lectures given with reference to Confirmation, and the two sisters were punctual in their attendance. Neither of them seemed quite at ease, but Brenda seemed to become more calm and placid,

while Minna's disquietude evidently increased as the bishop's visit drew near.

A day or two before the appointed time, the younger sister sought her pastor.

"I do wish very much to be confirmed," she said; "I do desire, with the Lord's help, to do what is right. I have read the little book, and am willing to give up every thing that is inconsistent with a Christian profession; that is, I think I am willing: I feel so most of the time. But, to tell the whole truth, sir, I am afraid I love the world still too much, and I may break my good resolutions."

"I am glad, Brenda, that you are willing to take up the cross, and not sorry that you are fearful of your steadfastness. All you can do, is to cast your burden upon the Lord, and trust Him to sustain you."

"Mr. Worthy, I am so easily led astray."

"I know you are. Your nature is a yielding and affectionate one: it is easy to persuade you both for good and for evil. This is one reason why you should put yourself under the best influences. To know our weakness is a good step towards curing it. You must try to be courageous, Brenda; you may pray God to strengthen your purpose, and give you fortitude and decision. You know that Peter trembled at the

word of a servant-maid, and yet became bold enough presently to preach the Gospel to the very men who crucified his Master. All things are possible to him that believeth."

"Well, I will try to make my vow honestly, and to keep it faithfully. But if I am tempted into foolishness and vanity, I am afraid you will think me a hypocrite."

"No, Brenda, I hope you will not fall away from your resolutions, but even if you do, I shall do my best to help you up again. But are you sure of one thing: are you sure you do not intend to fall?"

"Indeed, sir, indeed, I do not. I have thought how gracious God is to me, and how patient He has been with me; and how kind He is in forbidding no pleasures except what we ourselves can see are dangerous; and I feel a pleasure in thinking that I can deny myself for Him. Indeed, sir, I will try to do what is right."

"That is all that I can ask you to promise. May Almighty God, who has given you this will, grant you also strength and power to perform the same! But what of Minna? Will not she come forward too?"

"I am very much troubled about her. I do not know what to make of her. Sometimes she shuts herself up for hours, and then again she is

the gayest person I ever saw. Only yesterday, father said to her, Your spirits are quite boisterous, and in a moment she burst into tears and ran out of the room."

Mr. Worthy mused a moment, and asked, "Did she know you were coming here?"

"Yes, sir: I asked her to come with me, and she said that she could not see you. I suppose I had better tell you all. She said I must tell you that she was not fit to be confirmed; and when I tried to reason with her, begged me not to talk to her."

"Poor creature!" said the minister, "we must pray for her; this is her hour of darkness and of trial, and God only knows what the end will be."

The following Sunday dawned beautifully, and at an early hour the little church began to fill. The morning service and Confirmation were held before breakfast, for Mr. Worthy was desirous that at the mid-day service the candidates should receive their first communion at the hands of the bishop. He thought, too, that it was very suitable for these vows to be breathed in the fresh air of morning, when all was calm and still.

At the call of the bishop the candidates came forward. Brenda was among them, but Minna

remained in her seat, with a countenance calm but impenetrable.

On Brenda's head the hands of the bishop were laid first. "Defend, O Lord," he said, "this Thy child with Thy heavenly grace, that she may continue Thine forever, and daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more until she come to Thine everlasting kingdom."

As the bishop paused, there stole into the air a response from the choir; an amen, so sweet and solemn, a few simple notes, and yet of so perfect harmony, that Minna, who had not expected it, half started from her seat, and buried her face in her hands.

Every thing was still and silent; and as the bishop blessed one and another, the gray-haired man, and the youthful grandchild who knelt by him, the mistress first and her servant last; and as in varying cadence that amen swelled and died away, all hearts were moved, and many a silent prayer uprose for God's blessing upon those His children.

And how was it with Minna? She shall answer for herself, presently. I must hasten to describe a scene of a few weeks' later date.

A sick chamber, at night! A dim taper reveals the form of one stretched in unconsciousness upon her bed, while anxious faces are all

around. It is the mother of our young friends, who for days past has hung upon the brink of the grave.

"Let us pray," said the minister; and all knelt reverently, while in a low, but distinct voice, the prayer for the sick was said. And in a moment or two Mr. Worthy shook hands silently with the afflicted friends, and left the room.

But Minna followed him, and the two passed together into the sitting-room of the family.

"Mr. Worthy," said Minna, "I am almost distracted. My mother is dying, and I cannot pray for her. Last night they sent Brenda out, and, while they thought she was asleep, I found her in here, praying as if God were indeed her Father, and was listening to her. I knelt down too, but I could not, dared not say one word: and just now I tried to say amen to your prayer for mother, but I could not even say amen." And laying her head upon the sofa-pillow, she wept.

Mr. Worthy waited sympathizingly a few moments, and when she had recovered herself said:

"Tell me all about it."

Minna wiped her eyes, and answered:

"I will tell you. It will do me good to confess my wickedness. I knew you were right, that it would be the sin of Ananias and Sap-

phira for me to renounce the world, while I intended to find my pleasure in its frivolities. And oh, sir, when Brenda was confirmed, I felt as Esau must have felt. When that amen came out so beautifully, in my heart there was a cry as wild and bitter as ever Esau's was. I felt as if I longed to rush forward and say, 'Hast thou but one blessing, O my Father? Bless me, even me also, O my Father?' Ever since, I have felt myself a reprobate and an outcast. Do you think my mother's illness is a judgment on me?"

"I cannot tell, Minna; the Lord's ways are high above, out of our sight; but no doubt He intends by it to do all of us good in some way or other."

"But I feel almost a murderer; a mother like to die, and her own child not able to pray for her."

"But you shall pray for her; you are weary of fighting against God's Spirit and your own conscience, are you not?"

"Weary, even unto death."

"Well then, give up, Minna, give up all that wilfulness, and agree to do just what Christ bids you."

"I am willing to give up every thing; I know there is no happiness for me unless I can have peace with God; but I am afraid it is too late."

"No, it is late, but not too late. The younger

son said, I will not, but afterwards repented and went. God has given you grace to see and own your fault; He will surely accept your vows if you utter them now.

"Go to your room, then, and make your submission; make your vow, that come joy or woe, good or evil, you will bear your cross patiently, and follow in the steps of your Master; that you will not knowingly keep back part of the price. And then you can pray for your mother. Good-night, and the Lord comfort you."

I cannot tell what passed in Minna's chamber and in Minna's heart the next hour. She came forth with a serener face, and found her sister at the door. They embraced each other, they scarcely knew why, and Brenda whispered, "The doctor says there is a change for the better."

It was but a month later, that the bishop spent an evening in the town, and several persons who had been hindered before, were presented for Confirmation. Minna knelt meekly among the rest, and Brenda sung amen; and there was a fervent thanksgiving for recovery from sickness.

Among the contributions in the alms-basin, Mr. Worthy found one little package of larger amount than usual. Upon the paper was written the text, "The Lord hath chastened and cor-

rected me: but He hath not given me over unto death."

Dear reader! these pomps and vanities are a great snare in the way of young Christians.

The Church, for very wise and excellent reasons, abstains from minute definitions, and prefers to guide her children by the influence of pastoral counsels.

Be sure that you enlighten your conscience by seeking the advice of judicious and saintly persons; of wise and discreet pastors.

Be sure that in all your amusements you maintain your Christian integrity and self-respect.

Never permit yourself to be so engaged, that a reference to your Christian calling would bring a blush of shame upon your cheek.

As for cards, innocuous bits of pasteboard, as one may call them, custom has made them the favorite implement of the wicked.

We need something to amuse us: sometimes we need a weapon of defence. So be it then. But there is room for selection. Cards are as unsuited to the hands of a Christian as a slung-shot is to the hands of a gentleman.

Cards are the sibyl leaves on which thousands have spelled out the story of ruin.







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